

To Be Loved The Way You Love Me

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Summary: Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. Stoick is a tough and stern chief, but even he has to admit that this boy is softening him. Rewritten. Cover art by the amazing RazzlePazzleDooDot

## 1. Escape Plan

**\*\*Chapter 1: Escape Plan\*\***

**\*\*This is my rewritten version of 'To Be Loved the Way You Love Me'. I noticed I made everybody out-of-character and that the scenes between Astrid and Hiccup weren't even worthy to be used as tissue paper. I also noticed several other flaws - plot-wise and character-wise - that needed to be corrected so desperately that I decided to redo the whole idea.\*\***

**\*\*With this new rewritten version, you shall find torture, romance, angst so thick you can barely breathe, Stoick/Hiccup father/son feels, defensive!Hiccup, hurt/comfort, Snotlout/Hiccup angst, lots of dragon training, surprises, romantic flights, half-insane blacksmiths, Mildew being his douche-y self, Toothless/Hiccup closeness and friendship, a few dragon attacks, a bit of fluff to measure out the angst, maybe a snowball fight and, to top it off, an OC or two. \*\***

**\* \* \***

><p><em>This is Outcast Island.<em>

\_It's twelve days north of hopeless and a few degrees south of freezing to death. \_

\_I've grown up on it. I've explored its forests and waded in its

waters. I've done some pretty crazy things on this island, include attempt to teach myself archery and fishing. And let's not forget that charming time when I thought maybe I was a natural at the axe.\_

\_Needless to say, I've lived to regret trying to do all of those things, but there was one thing I did that I can't bring myself to regret, no matter how terrible the consequences were, how terrible they always will beâ€|because these consequences will follow us everywhere we go, because the cause of all the trouble is with me right now.\_

My heart beat fast with fear, but I had to try this â€" it was my only chance.

"Alright, bud," I whispered, measuring his tailfin. I knew it could take me all night. But I'd much rather fly away from here than swim.

I picked up the hammer, intensely grateful that once, I'd been the blacksmith's apprentice. It actually wasn't that great of a position.

The work was interesting, but the blacksmith was impatient and a terrible teacher. He wasn't really sure how to explain everything to me, so he'd often give me impossible jobs I had no idea how to complete.

Luckily, within the past few years, I've managed to figure out how to do most of the work, so I knew exactly what to do for Toothless' tail.

I just couldn't believe that tonight might be the nightâ€|after four long years of waiting, of searching and praying and hoping and just barely surviving, tonight just might be the night when I won back my freedom.

I worked as quickly as I could, feverishly, although I tried hard to make the prosthetic tail with the same care as I had the first one.

I heard the footsteps of a Viking walking past the forge, off night patrol, handing the lit torch to somebody else, who would wander at the edge of the island and examine noises.

This was the part I had to be quietest about.

The first night patroller was an overweight man whose hearing was failing. I could practically total the forge and this guy wouldn't hear it.

But the second night patrollerâ€|his name was Halfdan and he was young, new and completely devoted to his duty.

He was one of the younger soldiers on night patrol and he'd only just recently gotten into dragon training, if I understood those snippets of conversation I heard the guards exchange outside my door every morning.

Halfdan was kind of the talk of the town and it was really too bad he

was such an ass.

He wasn't the kind of guy who put Red Hot Itchyworms down inside your shirt or beat you up.

No, he was the kind of guy to tell his lackeys to do it and snigger happily at the results.

I was so caught up in thinking of him that I dropped the connecting rod and it clanged loudly off the stone floor.

\_So much for being quiet.\_

I heard the footsteps outside the forge echoing, nearly swallowed by the crashing of the waves and the hooting of owls.

"Who's that?" demanded Halfdan. "Who's there?"

I froze, one hand wrapped around the connecting rod, the other up in the air, ready to haul myself back up.

"You did hear that, didn't you?" Halfdan asked.

"It was probably nothing," Gust, the overweight one, replied. "You young people are always hearing things these days."

"I don't like it," muttered Halfdan. "Ketil never leaves the forge unlocked. It sounds like someone's creeping around inside there."

"There's no one there," Gust replied soothingly and even though I couldn't see them, only hear them, I could tell from his tone that Gust was doing his kind, grandfatherly pat-on-the-shoulder calm-down-it's-all-right thing. He'd done that to me a time or two, before he'd been forced to turn his back on me or be killed.

Anybody with half a brain cell would have done it, too, so I didn't blame him. It was turn away from me or be killed that day.

"Don't patronize me!" Halfdan snapped. "I know someone's there!" I heard his footsteps drawing closer.

Oh, godsâ€¦I was easy to hide, I was small and quiet and lithe and if I had to, I could squish myself beneath the work table I was using and go unnoticed, provided Halfdan was stupid enough to neglect checking under every table and knowing him, he probably was.

But Toothlessâ€¦Toothless was stealthy and silent, yes, but he was huge and bulky and he breathed fire. Oh, yeah, and add that to the fact that he hated Halfdan so much I had to hold Toothless back every time he saw him, and you could tell stealth wasn't going to fly.

If only it was Halfdan who was hard of hearing and Gust who wasn'tâ€¦Gust wouldn't think to check under the tables, either, and Toothless had heard me talk about him before. He knew how kind and gentle the older Viking could be and so he wouldn't attack him.

I knew what I had to do. I took a deep breath and prayed to every deity I knew, hoping one of them was listeningâ€¦please let someone be listeningâ€¦I really need help right now, Thorâ€¦I never asked you

for muchâ€¦pleaseâ€¦

I reached over and blew out the candle, plunging us into darkness. My heart beat fast with fear as I crawled over to Toothless, taking comfort from his scaly nose against my neck, nuzzling my hair, letting me know he was there for me if I needed him to be.

And oh, did I need him to be.

I scratched him under the chin, carefully enough to avoid his pressure point, and I talked as quickly as I could. "Listen, Toothless. Th-there's a back door just off to the side. I'm going to go push it open for you, okay? And you have to \_run.\_ You have to get out of the forge and \_hide as well as you can.\_ There's a big cluster of trees just outside the forgeâ€¦you know, that big cluster of Loki trees? I'll come for you, I promise. You just focus on getting to the trees, okay?"

Toothless nodded and licked my dirty cheek, looking sad, as though he knew this might end badly.

And yet, I couldn't help it. He had a better chance outside and I knew we both wouldn't have time to blend seamlessly into the background. So I did what I could. I waited until I heard Toothless curling up in the cluster of the trees, hidden perfectly in the shrubbery and then I heard loud footsteps.

"Gust, can I borrow your key?" asked Halfdan, sounding annoyed. "I lost mine the other day."

I smiled to myself.

\_More like that little fishbone you thought was a weakling pilfered it off you.\_

I rolled underneath the worktable as I heard Gust's weary voice. "Must we go through this every night, Halfdan? Every time you hear so much as a breeze swinging branches back and forth, you feel the need to investigate. There's nobody there."

But I heard the clinking of keys and I knew he was handing over his.

I heard the lock click as Halfdan ripped up the metal barred door and slipped inside, boots pounding on the wooden floor. "Where are you?" he breathed. "I'll find you. I know I willâ€¦"

I heard him subside to mumbling to himself as he overturned weapons, broken and repaired, newly made and newly sharpened and checked as thoroughly as he could for any intruders.

I heard his footsteps coming closer, saw his boots walk by my tableâ€¦and then, all at once, they stopped.

They stopped right in front of the table and I watched, gasping for breath but trying not to breathe too loudly, as he stopped. His knees began to bend.

My heart was about to pump out of my chest with how hard it was beatingâ€¦I couldn't breathe, I couldn't moveâ€¦I wished so badly I'd

decided to wing it and try to sneak away with Toothlessâ€|but I was easier to spot in the darkness and he wasn'tâ€|

A large part of me didn't regret the decision.

\_Toothless will be safe. That's all that matters.\_

"Halfdan!" Gust called. "There's nobody in there!"

His knees stopped bending. He slowly rose again, an annoyed mutter making its way up from the back of his throat. "Mmph," he muttered, irritated. "I know I heard something." I watched his boots stop near my table again, then walk away.

Thatâ€|was close.

I let out a breath I'd been holding since he'd entered the forge and I waited for them to walk away, to lock the forge back and go and patrol.

When I heard the door being locked back, I crawled out from my hiding place and pushed open the back door and quietly called for my dragon.

Toothless crawled out of the cluster of Loki trees and back inside the forge, pinning me to the ground and licking me, overjoyed that I was okay.

\_Well, that makes one person in the world.\_

I pushed those thoughts back. I couldn't afford to think like that right now. What mattered now was survival.

I had gotten good at thinking like a cornered and desperate animal these past few years and now it all came in handy. I listened closely and walked silently, I kept my tired eyes wide open, still searching the forge madly for any sign of movement. I didn't trust Halfdan to have left yet. He had a knack for appearing in places that I least wanted to see him in.

Then I began making the tail again, one thought resurfacing clearly above all the others: \_we are getting off Outcast Island.\_

## 2. Starting Over

**\*\*Chapter 2: Starting Over\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>I climbed on Toothless' back.<p>

The sky was still dark blue, but over in the southwest, the clouds had a distinctly purple tinge that let everyone know that morning wasn't far.

A cool, calming breeze blew off the ocean as I pressed down on the tailfin, as we rose up in the air and took off in the sky, away from that horrible, awful place, away from Halfdan, away from his lackeys, away from the guards, away from Savage, away fromâ€|

Away from everything.

I gently pushed my thoughts in another direction. I didn't want to think about how much I hated Outcast Island.

This was my chance to start a new life with Toothless. It was my chance to start over and I wasn't going to waste it.

I heard the night wolves falling silent, as they so often did when morning came. They were my company at night, mixing with the moon and the stars that gazed down on me from my little window at night. If I really struggled, I could feel a bit of ocean breeze on my face every night, if I could just find the right way to prop myself up on the sill for two seconds before I was dragged back down again, back down into cold, deep darknessâ€¦

\_No.\_

I had to stop thinking like that. I was starting over.

\* \* \*

><p>Neither Toothless nor I had slept that night, but once the real danger was past and Outcast Island was far behind us, I sensed him feeling the effects of fatigue.<p>

I lifted my foot off the pedal, letting the tail fin snap closed and we began freefalling towards the water.

On impulse, I did the trick I'd done one thousand times before, many years ago, in my old life. I undid my vest and jumped out of the saddle, freefalling.

I smelled salt and felt us getting nearer to the water, so I grabbed onto Toothless' saddle and buckled myself inside, but I still heard the splash as his belly skimmed the water.

A few seagulls cried out in alarm upon seeing a black-as-night dragon in the middle of the day, but I simply laughed, trying to keep the tiredness out of my mind.

We could sleep later, I reminded myself, before catching sight of an island on the horizon.

"Hey, Toothless," I mumbled, stroking his head in an attempt to calm him, "there's an island."

Toothless moaned in confirmation, letting me know I wasn't hallucinating.

I could've been doing anything these days.

I never thought I'd wind up on Outcast Island quite the way I had, I never thought I'd hear my dad tell me those terrible words, I never thought it was possible to hate somebody as much as he hated me, butâ€¦

\_No.\_

I was starting over.

I was starting over and hopefully, this island could help me in that quest.

I knew it was most likely going to be inhabited. But I also knew Toothless and I were capable of sleeping outside and eating very little. I knew we were capable of being quiet.

And there was a forest perfect for hiding out in just off one of the main paths, I noted as we got closer.

But I didn't note any more than that, because suddenly, weapons were flying at us from the direction of the island.

An arrow pierced Toothless' tailfin and I felt us beginning to fall.

\_Oh, perfect.\_

The arrow hadn't done more than pierce it and rip a bit of the top layer off, revealing its mechanics, but that was enough to seriously hamper our flight.

I saw us heading for the beach and closed my eyes, knowing I was about to become a stain on the sand. Toothless was already spreading his wings to hopefully slow his fall, and then he glanced over at me and grabbed me in his talons.

I felt his scaly front paws clutching at my arms, dragging me forward and then my boots were skimming the sand and he was letting me go.

I had a mouthful of sand and the cries of frightened Vikings ringing in my ears.

"Did you see that?"

"That dragon just grabbed that boy!"

"He might've saved the boy's life!"

"Restrain him!"

"Restrain the dragon!"

"Get the boy!"

"Who knows what that thing can do?!"

"Grab him!"

I lifted my head and gazed around me at the blurry shapes of overly muscled Vikings that I'd grown so used to on Outcast Island and just as I opened my mouth to tell them not to hurt Toothless, I realized my throat wouldn't let the words pass through.

My body wouldn't cooperate, wouldn't let me stand. So I lay there on the white sand and I made an odd noise before I let my head fall to the ground again, a headache threatening as I blacked out.

### 3. Waking Up

**\*\*Chapter 3: Waking Up\*\***

**\*\*Well, here's chapter 3! It's not as good as the others, but \*sigh\* I did what I could, okay? Too much happens in this one little chapter and I'm sorry but there's just not a good cutoff point to cut this in half! It's too long, but I don't... \*sighs\* \*\***

**\*\*Well, I hope you enjoy. I'm putting off working on my Rise of the Guardians story for you guys, so I hope you appreciate it.\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>When I awoke next, I was inside a warm house. I had a blanket on and dry clothes. I heard voices, one deep and male and the other the same, both with strong, Scottish accents.<p>

I lifted my head to free my ears and listened as hard as I could, trying to focus.

"He needs somewhere to go. We can't turn him away."

"I know what this is about, Stoick. Really. I do."

"What are you sayin', Gobber?" the one called Stoick asked.

I felt my muscles tense up as I remembered my dad's words about Stoick and his tribe, his rough voice so clear in my head that I was almost fooled into thinking he was standing there beside me.

**\* \* \***

><p>"<em>Why does everybody seem to hate the Hooligans so much, Father?" I'd called him Daddy not two weeks ago, but he'd told me I was too old to call him that, in more ways than one.<em>

"\_Chief Stoick," Dad told me, tilting his head up to face the sun, squinting his eyes against the bright light, "is a witless, cowardly chief who won his position by birth and his feared reputation by his violent temper. He's not terribly intelligent or cunning, both of which a Viking chief needs to be. Remember that, Hiccup. A Viking chief must be cunning. Intelligent."\_

"\_Why do I have to remember that?" I asked, surprised at those words. I hadn't yet been taught that staying silent and holding your tongue was the truest form of survival on Outcast Island.\_

"\_Because you're going to be chief of this tribe one day, stupid boy," Dad snarled. "Odin help us when the day comes, but someday, you will take my place. And you will do it right."\_

\_I lowered my head. "Yes, Father."\_

"\_Good. Now come on, Hiccup. We've got a long walk home ahead of us if we want to make it there before nightfall."\_

\_And we carried on trekking through the forest I'd come to know by



heart.\_

\* \* \*

><p>I was about five, maybe six in that memory and I still recalled that Dad let me wander anywhere and everywhere in those days. I was probably too young and stupid to be allowed out alone, but at least I wasn't like our village's personal pyromaniac, Bosi, who seemed to feel that anything could be bettered through a bit of fire and thus was often always caught with a magnifying glass in his hand, leaning over something in bright sunlight and trying to burn a hole in it, before he progressed to more dangerous ways of burning things.<p>

I zoned back in to the conversation in time to hear the man named Gobber say in his heavy accent, "It's about Hakon, isn't it?"

"Of course not," Chief Stoick replied harshly. "This is about a Viking in need. I thought he was a littleâ€|well, okay, Mildew had me believing everything he was saying about how this was clearly a sign that he was evil, being rescued by the deadliest of dragons, butâ€|I mean, look at him, Gobber. Really look at him. He's all bloodied up and he's so small he couldn't possibly have put up much of a fight against whoever did it. He's just a kid."

I heard one of them sigh. "If everything goes to hell," Gobber mumbled darkly, "just know I warned you, in any case."

I wondered briefly what they were talking about before the Vikings entered the room.

\_Odin.\_

Chief Stoick was even bigger up close. I could feel the fear threatening to choke me and the panic beginning to overwhelm me as, for the first time, I realized Toothless wasn't here. Maybe I should've noticed it sooner, but I had been so caught up in thinking of the Hooligan tribe and everything Dad had ever told me about Stoick the Vastâ€|

I swallowed and sat up quickly, throwing the blanket off. "I'm sorry. I'll just be going now. Thank you very much for your hospitality, Chief Stoick the Vast, but I will just beâ€|"

I started to get up, inching towards the door, but halfway there, my knees buckled, my side screamed out in agony and I hit the ground hard, my knees taking the full impact of the unforgiving wooden floor beneath me.

"Slow down," Chief Stoick said kindly, much kinder than he should have, anyway. Why wasn't he allâ€|brutal and bloodthirsty? And shouldn't he be carrying a spear with a Gronckle head on it?

Well, it has been quite awhile since Alvin's seen him, in any case.

"You may have noticed this, as you addressed me as 'Chief Stoick the Vast'," he continued slowly, his eyes kind, "but you're on the Isle of Berk. We're not about to throw you out to sea or anything, alright?"

"Aye," Gobber interjected. "And we're not gonna yank out a whip, lad."

I flinched at the mention of a whip. I remembered those all too well. "Wh-where's Toothless?" I stuttered, heart beating so quickly, it was like tiny bird's wings fluttering feebly in my chest. "I'm sorry if he growled at any of you or tried to attack anybody in the villageâ€¦|Toothless is very protective of me, you see."

"Who's Toothless?" Stoick asked.

This part might not go over so well. I knew how strongly Stoick opposed the Outcasts. I'd have to be very careful not to let my origin slip and that was if they didn't start demanding answers the moment I explained about me and Toothless. "He's a dragon about so highâ€¦|" I held my hand a few feet off the ground to indicate, sounding determinedly casual so they wouldn't panicâ€¦|hopefully. "He's kind of dark blue-black and he's got a wingspan of about forty feetâ€¦|erâ€¦|" I struggled to remember other things about him to help jog their memory. "Oh, yeah, he has green eyes."

How could I forget the color of the eyes that once pierced my heart, no matter how many disguises or masks I wore?

None of them could fool Toothless' piercing green eyes.

I swallowed and let my hand drop, waiting for Chief Stoick and his blonde friend to speak.

Gobber was making a strangled noise in the back of his throat, playing with his hands in an 'I'm not sure we should tell him' sort of way, which only made me all the more anxious.

"What happened to him?" I demanded.

Stoick exchanged a look with Gobber, clasped his hands together, turned to me and at last, spoke. "You do know what Vikings and dragons do to each other, right?"

Panic clawed at me, threatening to overwhelm me.

\_No. No. No. Toothless has to be okayâ€¦|\_

"You didn't kill him?" I whispered desperately, my heart breaking. I didn't know if I could bear to hear the answer. If Toothless goes, I go. It's the way it is. He's the only thing still tying me to this earth, the only reason I didn't give up back on Outcast Island. He's the only thing that kept me from surrendering, because resisting meant staying strong for him. I couldn't lose my dragon. It was like asking me to leave behind my whole world.

Stoick took a breath. "No." I relaxed, but he kept speaking. "But only because we couldn't get close enough. We managed to subdue him for now, but I can't allow him to roam free with you, alright? We're killing him as soon as we can."

"No!" I stood up again, off my knees, frantically pacing the room. "No, no, no, you\_ can't\_, you can't kill him, Chief. I'm leaving soon. Very soon. I'll be out of your hair, just let him go."

"Boyâ€" Stoick began, but I interrupted.

"Name's Hiccup. Not that that matters. Yeah, actually, if we're going to keep things real, don't bother. Just call me 'useless'. Or 'accident'. Whichever one works for you. Just don't kill him."

"Shh," Gobber said soothingly, standing up and putting calming hands on my shoulders. I winced, his fingers finding the welts left over from my last whipping.

"Please stop," I whispered, sliding out from beneath his touch that was fast inflaming the tender, healing wounds. "Just don't kill him. We'll leave. Right now. You'll never have to see him again, either of us again, I'll leave, just tell me where he is, I'll get him myselfâ€"

"Slow down," Stoick repeated gently. "Sonâ€"

"Don't call me that," I interrupted. "I told you, 'useless' 'mistake' 'accident' 'screw-up' â€" those are fine, ok? Just don't call me that."

He sighed, rubbing at his forehead. "Hiccupâ€|" my name sounded both foreign and familiar on his tongue, like he was somebody I'd known a long time ago. "Calm down."

\_You're taking my whole WORLD away from me and you want me to calm down?\_

"Just let me leave," I tried desperately.

I saw him exchange a silent glance with Gobber, as if trying to decide how crazy I was.

I wasn't crazy. I was just trying to survive.

There was a silence as I waited for their decision. I had a brief, scary thought and it so nearly slipped out: what if I could \_show\_ them Toothless wouldn't hurt them?

I banished the thought immediately, knowing I could never do that if I hoped to get off here alive and unscathed.

\_But what about Toothless?\_

No matter what, everything I did had to be okay with Toothless, too and leaving him behind on a hostile island definitely wouldn't be okay with him or me.

Even if I didn't care about him â€" an unimaginable thought â€" what he did for me back there on Outcast Island was just unforgettable. I couldn't leave him behind after he showed that kind of loyalty to me, anyway.

"It's his funeral," Gobber broke the silence.

"That dragon will kill us the second he's free," Stoick retorted furiously.

I found it hard to breathe when I realized they were so calmly discussing the fate of my dragon. "Iâ€" I began, but Gobber interrupted.

"The way he's making it soundâ€"

"Gobber." Stoick grabbed at the other man's beefy arm and physically dragged him into the next room, but by the sound of it, they weren't struggling to keep their voices down. "This boy comes from an unknown island," Stoick started and I could tell he was getting ready to make a speech that was simply unanswerable. "He's got nothing with him except a dragon. He's got no food, no supplies â€" chances are he's a little crazy, even without the dragon. Leaving his tribe isn't uncommon among the younger generation these days, but surely his family would give him food and clothing and he wouldn't be so badly injured?"

"Exactly," Gobber countered and I smiled at his argumentative talent. "He's badly injured, Stoick. He may need our help."

Silence.

Gobber exited the room and came into the next one, the one I sat in so impatiently. I jumped up. "What's going on?"

"With the dragon?" Gobber asked, turning to me. "Your guess is as good as mine."

"Chiefâ€" I began as Stoick walked into the room.

"How old are you?" Stoick asked, expertly cutting me off. I heard Gobber draw a sharp breath and glanced up to see him glaring at Stoick.

"S-sixteen." I replied, surprised. I knew it was risky to tell the truth about anything, especially my name and age, but it was likely they'd never heard of me before. It wasn't like I was some well-known Viking. In fact, my dad tried to hush everything up and confine it to Outcast Island.

Of course, the Murderous and the Uglithugs heard of it and came to get a closer look and see if everything was true, but Dad lied his way out of it, the way he always does.

Stoick shot Gobber a meaningful glance, then turned back to me and nodded.

What more could I do? I had to do this.

I pushed my curiosity about their conversation down and prayed that luck would be with me. "If you don't trust my dragon, then let me show you."

#### 4. Taking Chances

**\*\*Chapter 4: Taking Chances\*\***

**\*\*Um. So. Yeah. I finished this chapter two days ago, along with the third, but I was too lazy to go back and reread it yesterday, so I**

let it sit in Microsoft Word because I didn't want to edit xP because I thought this chapter was terrible and then I reread it and was like, 'well, it's not SO bad'. \*\*

\*\*And seriously, guys, I'm not being hard on myself. You did READ the first version, didn't you? xD dang, that version was awful xD  
\*\*

\*\*Oh, yeah, that reminds me! It's not completely set up yet (I'll tell you guys when it is, but that could take a few weeks) but I'm setting up an ask blog on tumblr for Hiccup! And yes, I did misspell it, but I meant to, so it'll show up in the AN. Anyway, it's an ask blog for Hiccup from \*this\* AU xD what do you think? I'll give you guys the link (as best as I can with FF breathing down my neck about links xD) when it's ready and up :) \*\*

\*\*So even when the story ends, there will still be a small part of it that keeps going :) \*whispers\* also just because role-playing Hiccup and answering like him is too awesome\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Show me what?" Stoick barked, after a long period of silence. He looked much angrier than when I'd first seen him and he was glaring down at me so harshly I almost lost my nerve.<p>

\_Focus, Hiccup. Toothless. Do it for Toothless.\_

I forced myself to stare directly back at him, trying to keep the fear out of my voice, off my face. "Let me show you th-the reason why you should let him go."

There was another silence, one I knew not to break.

"What will you do?"

"I'm going to show you why you shouldn't kill him." I replied slowly, looking into his eyes, never breaking my gaze. I learned that eye contact lets people know you're being honest and that they can trust you. He couldn't trust me and Toothless was likely to attack everybody in this village depending on how they "subdued" him, but he wasn't ever gonna know that.

Gobber looked pointedly at Stoick, who demanded aggressively, "What would you do?"

"Iâ€¦" I knew what I would do, but he'd never believe me. "I told you, I'd show you how to subdue a dragon. And you could use them on the dragons here."

I saw Stoick's eyebrows fly up and didn't try to press my luck.

"You could help us?" he asked, surprised.

"Yeah," I responded. "I could."

"Alright," Stoick nodded. "What's your price?"

Vikings didn't owe debts.

"Your silence," I replied. He looked surprised again, but I continued without thinking about it. "I want you to promise me if I help you that you won't spread it around to the other tribes and that you'll let me leave immediately after, with Toothless by my side."

"That's not too hard of a bargain," Gobber objected. "It makes it sound as if we're getting the better end of the deal."

I shrugged. "I promise you, Chief Stoick, your tribe's silence would mean the world to me."

Chief Stoick nodded, but then he looked bewildered. "Why do you ask me for something so simple? You could've asked for that and help with your injuries or something, too. You could've asked for help with something else. Food, clothing, medical treatment — you came here with no supplies, after all."

I shook my head. "I don't need your help. I'll find a way to get that stuff." I knew I'd said the wrong thing at Stoick's skeptical look. He didn't believe I could take care of myself.

Well, he didn't know I'd been doing it for the past sixteen years. Caring for myself and Toothless was second nature to me, now.

"I just need Toothless back and for you to stay quiet about this," I repeated, eager to make it clear I was okay. "That's all I ask."

"Alright," Stoick replied uncertainly. "Let's go."

"Go where?" I asked.

"To your — dragon," it sounded as if the words were physically painful for him to force out and I realized, despite his size and general air of confidence, he was probably very scared. "I won't pretend your help will go unappreciated or unused, but if this is a trick —"

"No," I responded. "I promise it's not."

\_\_And what do you think, you're going to be Hiccup the Hero? Yeah, right. Get over yourself. You tried this once before, remember?\_\_

SHUT UP! This isn't me trying to be a hero, I thought to myself. Or somehow make up for what happened last time. I'm trying to get off this damned island!

And helping Berk seemed to be the only way away from it, so I would do that. Once they had proof, I would tell them then.

And they would believe me this time.

The thing that happened last time wouldn't happen this time. I simply wouldn't let it. I'd play my cards right this time.

Here was my second chance to give someone help, to prove to somebody that dragons were really good, just scary-looking and horribly misunderstood creatures.

\_Oh, like yourself?\_

Shut it, I thought to that snide little voice in my head. Then I said, "Alright. We can do it now."

\* \* \*

><p>Gobber and Stoick both carried weapons as they led the way to Toothless' prison room, Gobber behind me, Stoick leading the way.<p>

I knew they didn't trust me. I knew they thought I was going to let Toothless kill them all.

But I knew he wouldn't kill them if I was there to tell him no. He'd listen to me, I was sure of it.

The cell door opened as my heart clenched. He was in a cell. If they lost what little trust I'd gotten from them, I'd be in a cell, too.

They stood at the back of the room and I slowly walked forward, approaching Toothless, taking off his muzzle. He opened his eyes and hissed loudly at me, before realizing who it was. He licked my cheek and I smiled brightly, for once forgetting I had two burly Vikings who could more likely than not knock me over with their breath if I did something they didn't like.

I swallowed and said, "What I'm about to show you doesn't leave Berk, okay?"

"I know that, now would you get on with it?" Stoick snapped.

I nodded quickly, making note of his short temper. It seemed that I'd be spending an hour or so in his company, so I'd better know all I could about him. "Sorry. Uh, Toothless, bud, we're gonna show 'em some stuffâ€"

Toothless roared loudly at me.

"Oh, gods," I mumbled. "No, Toothless, not like that. We're helping them, butâ€"

Toothless' eyes spoke nothing but the pain of betrayal.

"WOULD YOU LISTEN?" I bellowed, sensing danger as he began building up a fireball in his throat to hurl anywhere.

He looked surprised and he swallowed it. He'd never heard me raise my voice before when it wasn't a matter of life or death and my yell surprised me.

He lowered his head in a sign of obedience and I sighed, stroking his head. "It's alright, bud, they'reâ€|" I cut them a look. "Friends. Sort of. It's not like last time. I promise you."

I could almost feel Stoick and Gobber staring at us as I continued, "So, just, you know, show 'emâ€|"

He pressed his nose into my palm and leaned over Gobber, who looked

paralyzed with fear as Toothless took a delicate sniff.

He obviously deemed Gobber trustworthy, because he licked him lightly, but seconds after that, he circled me protectively, as if telling Gobber a lick on the hand meant nothing in terms of trust.

He leaned over Stoick and sniffed him, too, but he backed away a few feet. He wasn't growling, which was a good sign, but he was still backing away, meaning he hadâ€|reservations.

I nodded. I understood that. I didn't even need to sniff them with a dragon's sensory skills to know I couldn't trust Stoick completely. Gobber seemed a little more focused on getting the whole darn thing over with, but Stoick seemedâ€|off.

Toothless went up to Gobber again, obviously liking him better and privately, I did, too.

"Um, wellâ€|" I began awkwardly as Gobber leaned away from him. "Give me your hand."

"Why?" Gobber asked suspiciously.

"Just toâ€|you knowâ€|" I gestured to Toothless and he looked unconvinced. "I promise," I said reassuringly, "he's not gonna hurt you."

Gobber gave me a long, skeptical look.

"Really," I added.

He slowly extended a shaking hand the size of my whole body and I slowly brought it up to the dragon's snout and he purred a little at the man's rough hands.

Gobber smiled a little and I was certain I knew why: the mix of joy and exhilaration and throw in a bit of fear and the thrill that you did something you never thought you'd do and it added for a pretty incredible mix of emotions.

I gave Gobber a few minutes to collect himself from the disorientation and heard Stoick immediately begin asking him questions as I turned back to Toothless.

"Alright, bud," I whispered. "I promise it'll be over soon."

"You should let Stoick touch it," Gobber told me.

I pointedly ignored the 'it'. "What do you say, bud? Think you trust him enough?"

Toothless gave me a look that clearly read, \_I wouldn't get too close.\_

"I know, I know," I sighed, putting up my hands. "Honestly, I'm trying not to. I just think it'd be a step in the right direction if he were to feel itâ€|I think then he'd understand it a little better, huh?"



Toothless grumbled about it deep in his throat, but he lifted his head to Stoick's hand and allowed the man to touch him.

I gently motioned for Gobber and him to put their weapons down. Gobber bit his lip and slowly released his axe, but Stoick's grip on his sword never faltered.

Toothless was a good judge of character, though and if he was allowing Stoick to touch him, the chief couldn't be all that bad.

Toothless pulled away from him and stalked back over to me, giving me a 'you-owe-me' look. I nodded to signify I understood, turning back to Stoick, waiting for his decision.

If he decided that maybe I was wrong about themâ€¦

"Wellâ€¦" he began.

Toothless was quickly opening and closing his prosthetic tail, a bit of a nervous habit he'd developed a few years back. It was also useful for finding him when we got separated the way we had that nightâ€¦

\_No. \_I shut those thoughts down before they could fully get pulled up. I was starting over.

## 5. Weaving Webs

### \*\*Chapter 5: Weaving Webs\*\*

\*\*This is chapter 5. It is called 'Weaving Webs' because I have nothing else to call it. It has some Hiccup angst, but the angst has not yet gotten so thick that you can barely breathe. Please. Compared to some of my other stories, this is MILD angst xD Also, in my author's note on chapter 1 I promised a lot more than is coming. There might not be HiccupxAstrid romance is all. There will still be defensive!Hiccup, which you get to see here and you also get to see a bit of Hiccup/Snotlout angst and rivalry, purely because I adore Hiccup/Snotlout rivalry, which explains why I enjoyed Thaw Fest so much while everybody else hated it. xD You get to see Toothless/Hiccup closeness and friendship within the next three chapters xD I've got everything planned out. \*\*

\*\*And yes, the mild fluff to measure out the angst is still coming.  
\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick turned to me. "I'm warning you, the rest of the village won't listen. They won't even want to get close."<p>

"You could get a lot closer next time if you drop your weapons," I pointed out.

He folded his muscled arms and glared at me. "Are you trying to get us all killed?"

"No," I replied shortly, turning back to pet Toothless' snout. "As

you just saw, I'm trying to help you."

The silence swirled around us, the loudest sound I'd ever heard as I waited for their decree.

When neither of them spoke, I did. "Toothless lost half of his tail when we met," I said slowly, never taking my eyes off my dragon. "That was actually how we met. I made him a prosthetic tail so he could fly again, but, unfortunately, when you shot those arrows at him, they broke the material of his prosthetic. Without the tools to build another one, we can't leave this island by air."

"We can make you a boat," Stoick began stiffly. "If that's what youâ€"

"No," I cut in. "That's not what I want. I need the materials to build a prosthetic again. Do you think the blacksmith of Berk would be willing to loan me his tools for a few days, while I help with the dragons?"

"Well, you're lookin' at the blacksmith," Gobber said and I raised an eyebrow.

"Would you be willing to let me use your tools?"

"'Course," Gobber replied easily.

I nodded gratefully, shooting him a smile. I could express my gratitude in him later. The chief was still here and I was having trouble trusting him.

The scary thing was, I didn't even know why. Was it paranoia orâ€something else? Was I right?

Either way, I thought consolingly to myself, you won't have to put up with him for much longer. Just two, three days.

Once we had gotten everything settled about Toothless' prosthetic, Stoick stiffly offered me food, clothing and medical treatment.

"I don't have any food," I explained quietly. "Or a change of clothes. My leave wasâ€hasty."

\_To say the least. Why don't you just wave a big, fat sign over your head reading, "I'M AN OUTCAST!"? \_

"Why did you leave so quickly?" Gobber asked as he showed me where the Great Hall was located.

I shrugged, trying to evade the question without making it too obvious. "Eh. You know how it is. I didn't want to stay on the island. I had â€feeling about it."

\_Yeah, there were more than feelings on Outcast Island. You knew what they would have done to you if you were caughtâ€|\_

\_No. \_For the last damned time, I was starting over and I was done thinking about it. I was done thinking about Outcast Island and Halfdan and Gust and Dad and Ketil the blacksmithâ€|

"Oh. Alright." Gobber nodded.

Stoick broke into our conversation. "Would you like some help with those injuries? They look nasty." He spoke quietly and I caught a glimmer of something in his eyes, something sad and cold and heartbroken, but it vanished almost immediately, leaving me to wonder if I wasn't the only one with secrets.

"No, I'll be fine," I responded with a shrug. I knew basic First Aid. I didn't think I needed help.

We entered the Great Hall and Gobber said, "I assume you want some food first and then you can wash your injuries and get started on the tail. I'll show you the forge."

"Thank you," I nodded.

The chief departed and Gobber disappeared into the small crowd of Vikings and while he was gone, a group of about five teens approached me.

"Is it true?" asked a husky blonde boy anxiously.

"Is what true?" I demanded.

"You were right, New Guy is cute," a blonde girl with three braids said, peering at me.

I blushed, inching backward, trying to step away, not only because their stares were making me uncomfortable, but also because if this girl thought I was attractive, she needed to be taken to a mental hospital, pronto.

"Oh, great," said a skinny guy with lots of dirty-blonde hair. "My sister decided to join the conversation."

The girl turned back to him and glared. "You shut up."

"No, you shut up."

"No, you!"

"So what's the runt's name?" demanded a muscular, dark-haired boy, stepping up beside me and cutting easily through the siblings' argument. I guessed he must have had lots of practice.

I considered calling him something much worse than 'runt' and then reminded myself not to sink to his level. "Hiccup."

"Oh, that's fitting," he snorted and the last person, a blonde girl, the only one who hadn't yet spoken, snapped, "Oh, shut up, Snotlout" and turned to me.

"Sorry about him," she said smoothly. "He's a realâ€¦" she cast a glance back at him. He was looking offended.

I shrugged. "He's not so bad."

"You haven't seen the worst of him," she replied lightly and Snotlout interjected. "Hey! Babe!"

"Don't call me that," she flared, turning on him.

Gobber appeared beside me, carrying two plates piled with food. He led me to a table at the back of the hall and set the plates down there, plopping down on one of the benches, so I took the one across from him.

"No trouble?" he asked.

I shook my head. "Nope. None."

"I just saw you talkin' to the kids," he said, casting a wary eye over at them. "And some of them aren't tooâ€|"

"Smart?" I offered and Gobber sighed. "I guess."

He turned back to his food, so I did, too.

As I began eating, he started asking me questions that I tried mostly to avoid.

"So, where'd you live before, Hiccup?" he asked.

\_Oh, what a tangled web we weaveâ€|\_

I struggled to find an evasive answer without making the blacksmith totally hate me. Not that I had to give a damn what this guy thought of me, but it might work wonders for the hours I'd have to spend in his forge. It'd only take a night or two. I'd been meaning to redo his prosthetic anyway, before everything that happened, beforeâ€"

\_You're starting over. Stop it.\_

I realized I hadn't replied to his question for a few long seconds, long enough to let him know I was going to lie, so I feigned innocence. "I'm sorry? I didn't hear you question."

"Where'd you live before you came around here?" Gobber repeated in a clearer voice.

I shrugged, ready to respond now, mentally running through all the tribes Dad had ever told me about.

\_Meatheads? Nah, they visit Berk too much. Too risky.\_

\_Bog-Burglars? Oh, hell no, they're all girls! You have enough trouble just TALKING to the opposite sex.\_

\_Murderous? Um, no, as far as I remember, they're in a blood feud with the Hooligans. \_

\_Hysterics? No, no, no. Even Dad seemed to fear THOSE guys.\_

\_The Berserkers?\_

I thought of the last time I'd seen the heir to the Berserker tribe, when the Outcasts had declared war on them. That awful kidâ€|what was

his name again? Dagur?

\_Definitely not.\_

But then, the only two tribes left I knew of were the Lava-Louts and the Outcasts and the Hooligans hated both.

So I went with the next-best thing. "I've been on my own, with Toothless."

And in the end, I always was.

Gobber gave me a long look. "You're awfully young."

I shrugged. "I'm sixteen."

"That's still a kid."

"I'll live."

For the first time, Gobber shut up and stopped asking me questions. I didn't mind him, but I was relieved he'd stopped interrogating me.

It was almost like he was suspiciousâ€¦

\_Calm down, \_I cautioned myself. I couldn't spend every waking moment worrying about how much to let slip and how much to keep inside.

I had to play it cool.

What a tangled web, indeed.

## 6. Pretending To Be

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 6: Pretending To Be

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So, there's some angst in here as well, and my computer keeps telling me I misspelled 'be' which I sincerely doubt. Anyway, Hiccup has some angst about Outcast Island, which I adore writing. This fanfiction is already half as long as the original work and we're nowhere near being done yet :D It actually feels right now that Gobber is more the second main character than Stoick is, but there's a reason I'm setting Stoick up to seem so untrustworthy to Hiccup, I promise. Trying not to give too much away here, but seriously :P Also, I'm sorry for the lame chapter title. This one had no good title, either. I apologize :P <strong>

\* \* \*

><p>As we walked to the forge when we were done eating, Stoick caught up with us. "I wanted to talk to you," he told me.<p>

I felt a thrill of fear as I remembered the last time I'd heard that phrase.

"\_Ready to talk, dragon conqueror?" he asked.\_

"\_I would rather die than talk to you," I responded stubbornly and I heard him laughing, laughing, laughing as he said, "Well, that's really too bad. Because I wanted to talk to you. And we all know Alvin the Treacherous gets what he wantsâ€¦|"\_

"Alright," I told him, trying to shake off the fear. I was in a different place now. On Outcast Island, surviving was a conscious effort. On Berk, the only thing I had to do to stay out of a cell wasâ€¦|pretend to be somebody I'm not. Bury the real me.

Stoick didn't ask for it to be private, which I was relieved about. I know I've said it a million times in this story, but there was definitely something wrong with him.

"I wanted to talk," he said when we'd reached the forge, "about the dragons."

"I know," I interrupted. "But, Chief, I really can only help when they attackâ€¦"

"I know that," he cut in, waving a hand dismissively to shut me up. "That wasn't it. What I wanted to ask you was aboutâ€¦|something you said."

I cocked my head, pulling out my sketchbook and propping it open on one of the worktables, examining the drawing of Toothless' tail. I'd left him in the forest, at the village's request, with a pile of fish that I knew would keep him preoccupied until I went to get him.

I'd much rather have had him here with me, but the village was already starting to whisper about me, about how I should leaveâ€¦|

Having a Night Fury certainly complicated things. But I wouldn't change it for the world. Who needs uncomplicated when your best friend is somebody like Toothless?

"Yeah?" I asked, flipping idly to the most recent drawing I'd done to modify his tail. It wasn't terribly recent, in itself â€" it was about four, maybe five years old and I knew I'd have to have another look at it to be able to tell how to repair or remake it.

Remaking would take longer, but I'd been meaning to for some time nowâ€¦|I chewed my lip, lost in thought as Stoick talked.

"You make it sound like theyâ€¦|don't really have a choice but to attack," the chief managed. "What was that about?"

"Well, it's true," I said without looking up from studying the drawing. "They don't have a choice."

There was a silence from behind me and I stood. "I'm gonna need Toothless' tail to do this. I'm gonna have to bring him into the forge, okay?"

Technically, I didn't need Toothless with me in the forge, but I hated being away from him. It gave me this tight feeling in my chest, like something was going to go horribly wrong if he wasn't there with me. Guess I'd spent too long like thatâ€

\_Stop. Starting over, remember?\_

Of course I remembered.

"Wait. What do you mean, they don't have a choice?" Stoick looked confused.

I shrugged. "You probably wouldn't believe me even if I told you, Chief." I started heading for the back door and I heard him start talking to me again, so I turned around.

"What do you mean?" he demanded again and I could tell he wasn't going to take no for an answer.

I sighed, glancing reluctantly at my sketchbook, lying open on the worktable. This would take at least two hours to explainâ€|two hours in which I could be working on the tailâ€|if I stayed here too long, Dad would get wind of where I was and it wouldn't be just me in danger, but fathers and mothers and sons and daughters, families with little children and elderly people with fatigue and slower reflexes.

But how exactly do you explain that to someone?

"Hello, a creepy psychopath is after me, may I stay on your island? Oh, yeah and I'm with the Vikings' most feared enemy, not to mention I was born into a tribe full of exiles. Don't mind the dragon. He won't chew anybody's limbs off unless he thinks I'm being threatened and we both feel that way basically all the time."

Yeah. Not.

I sighed and sat down on an overturned barrel and began to explain. "Okay. You're gonna think I'm crazy, but, there's this queenâ€|"

## 7. Drawings and Compliments

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 7: Drawings and Compliments

\* \* \*

><p>"Dragon training begins and ends with trust," I said to Gobber, focusing on the prosthetic tail as he tentatively offered Toothless some dragon nip. My attempts to remake the tail had turned into giving Gobber an impromptu dragon training lesson on the side and don't even ask how he'd weaseled that one out of me.<p>

"You guys are doing great," I encouraged, flipping my sketchbook open to the right page again. I used to hate looking at the sketchbook after my mom died. She'd given to me and I dreaded what she might think of what her family had become after her death.

We'd become monsters, Dad and I.

There she was, teaching about honesty and integrity and how the tribes shouldn't keep slaves, even though we were OUTCASTS, for Thor's sake and here I was, lying my heart out to escape being tossed into a cell and there Dad was beingâ€|him.

I pushed my thoughts away from her and back to the prosthetic tail, not even paying attention to what was going on behind meâ€|

Until I heard a squelching sound and then a splat.

"HICCUP!" Gobber bellowed, as though I'd done something eternally indecent. I whipped around so fast, I collided with the barrel resting beside my worktable and ended up knocking it over with the tail, and it turned out to be a full of weapons.

I tripped over an axe handle and ended up half-wading through the pile, trying to move the barrel so I could see what Gobber was yelling about.

He set the barrel right-side-up again and began putting the weapons back into it, handling them one-handedly and with ease.

That's when I noticed he gripped something in his other hand.

"Um, Gobber?" I asked. "What is that?" I pointed at his real hand and he held up the object inside.

I turned to Toothless, knowing what had happened and determined to give him a disapproving look, but a laugh escaped me.

Gobber scowled. "Yeah, yeah, yuk it up," he said, not amused, as I managed to collect myself. "You could've at least told me he randomly barfs up fish."

"He was sharing his food," I defended him. "You must've looked hungry to him."

"I wasn't," Gobber replied. "And this made me even less hungry."

I chuckled and turned away from him, giving Toothless an affectionate pat on the head. Gobber wasn't paying attention to the fish anymore; it had slid to the floor with a splat and he was peering over my work desk, although there was nothing to see.

Toothless licked my cheek and I laughed a little, rubbing the spit away and stood, looking over at the blacksmith. "Gobber? What're you looking at?"



"Wow," Gobber breathed, picking something up. It was my sketchbook.

"Yeah, I know," I mumbled. "Can you believe how much work that tail is gonnaâ€"

"It's not the tail, Hiccup. It's this." He pointed to a drawing of Toothless I'd done awhile ago.

"Yeah," I squinted. "What's 'wow' about it?"

"You've got a lot of talent," he told me. "Honestly, this is really good."

The forge suddenly felt too hot and I found I couldn't look Gobber in the eye as I slowly walked back to my worktable, eyes fixed on my boots. "No, no, it's not that great. Honestly."

"Hiccup, how can you say that? You're really talented," Gobber replied, flipping through the book.

"No," I protested. "I'm not." Toothless gave my hand an affectionate lick and I smiled down at him, grateful for his presence in the forge.

Gobber set the book down and looked over at me; pride was showing clearly in his features. "How long have you been drawing?"

"Dunno," I shrugged, scuffing the toe of my boot against the wooden floor uncomfortably. I really didn't like him looking at my drawings and I liked it even less that he was complimenting them. "Since I was seven or eight, I think. Too young to be drawing, really."

"That explains it," Gobber nodded. "If you draw at an early age, you're likely to only get better as the years pass. And you've got some skills, kiddo." He handed me back the sketchbook and I trained my eyes on the scorched and scratched-up wooden floor. "Whatever."

"Anyway, you'd better get back to work. I have a feeling Chief Stoick will only keep putting up with you for a few more days."

\_I wish \_I \_could stop putting up with me.\_

"Yeah," I nodded, dropping my head and picking up the prosthetic tail again. "I know."

Silence fell between us.

## 8. Scarred Over

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 8: Scarred Over

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: AAAAAAAAAAAAAANGST. In case you couldn't tell, last chap was mild fluff to measure out angst, even though angst seeped in anyway. :P But now Hiccup has some proper angst about Outcast Island :D\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>I have questions," Dad smiled. "And I know you will answer them before the day is done."<em>

"\_Give it up, Alvin!" I yelled at him. "I'm not helping you!" My head was pounding and gods, everything on me hurt but I wasn't about to let him know that. If you give in to pain, you're letting the enemy win.\_

\_I swallowed, waiting for Dad's next move. \_

"\_Maybe you won't help me," Dad responded. "But would you help your precious dragon?"\_

\_There was a desperate roar from nearby and I was struggling to get at him, to get to my dragon, to poor Toothless, I couldn't stand it, I couldn't bear it, I had to be there, how could they hurt him?\_

\_I could feel hot tears building up in my eyes and a few found their way down my face as I realized giving in to pain wasn't something Dad needed, just an occasional perk of the job. So, though I knew how much he liked it, I let my head fall and I gave in to the pain.\_

"It was just a dream," I whispered to myself. Sweat ran down my forehead and neck and though I was hot, too hot, I was also shaking, whether from cold or fear I didn't know. It had seemed so realâ€|probably because something frighteningly similar had happened onceâ€|

"Dad isn't here," I told myself. "He can't hurt Toothless." As if for emphasis on this, I reached over and touched Toothless' head. I was sleeping in the forge, using his back for a pillow. He didn't mind it â€" he even encouraged it most nights, as it was the only way either of us felt safe enough to sleep.

Toothless' eyes snapped open and he looked over at me, green eyes wide and shiny and sad.

He nudged me with his nose, sitting up.

"It was nothing," I told him. "Go back to sleep, Toothless."

He whined again, nudging me harder this time.

"It was just a nightmare," I explained.

He gave a motherly, sad sigh and opened his wings, and I knew what he wanted. I crawled closer to him and he wrapped me in his wings, our strange version of a hug.

"It's okay," I assured him. "So long as Dad isn't here, we're okay."

He nodded, but there seemed to be something he wasn't saying, some emotion he wouldn't let me see. When he turned to face me full on, I saw it: guilt.

I swallowed as his eyes seemed to tell me, 'I didn't protect you the first time and I'm sorry.'

"Toothless, no," I said, pressing myself closer to him, my voice muffled by his wings and scales. "You couldn't have done anything. If anyone should be feeling guilty about this, it should be me."

Toothless drew away from me and gave me an angry, 'don't go there' look. I sighed. "Toothless, I should've tried harder on Outcast Island, I justâ€" I don't know how you can forgive me for what I let them do to youâ€"

Toothless glared at me and began growling at me, signifying his displeasure.

I gave up trying to apologize and just clung to him, because I never wanted to let him go again. I never would let him go again. The times ahead were gonna be tough â€" surviving alone always was. But I'd done it once, on Outcast Island. I'd done it for years on Outcast Island. I could do it againâ€|forever.

Finally, when the world went quiet and there was nothing but peace all around, I drew away from him and offered him a weak smile. "Maybe we should go back to sleep," I said, gesturing to the window. "It's still dark outside."

I'd tried telling Gobber I could sleep in the forest, but he wouldn't listen. He didn't listen about my injuries, either and helped me with them, even though I insisted I could get them.

He had asked me questions last night, too, as he washed the blood from my hairline and bandaged up the graze on my temple, just above my eyebrow.

"\_Where'd you get all these injuries, anyway?" he asked as he dabbed water and something with a sickening scent and a crazy sting on my temple. "They don't seem like the type of things you could've gotten all on your own."\_

Translated: tell me the truth for once.

"\_Uhâ€|" I stuttered, sounding like a total idiot. "I wasâ€|pillaging. Stealing from the Meathead Public Library, you know the oneâ€|the Hairy Scary Librarian caught me and, wellâ€|" I gestured to myself. "I managed to avoid his Heart-Slicers, thankfully."\_

\_Gobber didn't challenge my explanation.\_

He knew what Hairy was like, too, I'd assumed, and sure enough, it wasn't long before he'd gone into a long-winded explanation of how

he'd once pilfered a book on dragon killing from the library, hoping that there would be something helpful in there to help them deal with the dragons.

Unfortunately, he'd said, it turned out to have only a few useful tips in there, and one of them ("yell at it") wouldn't have worked on anything bigger than a Terrible Terror.

"Oops," he gave a sheepish grin as he glanced out the window and saw the stars out, the moon shining its cold beam of light down on us. "I'd better let ya get some sleep, huh?"

I had been getting more and more tired all throughout his story, but I hadn't wanted to say so, because it was actually a really interesting story and besidesâ€¦I knew I'd have nightmares anyway. I'd just wanted to prolong it.

Gobber had wanted me to sleep in the forge and though I'd argued, eventually my common sense won over my pride.

I'd gone to bed, fallen asleep within seconds and now, here I was, all alone in the dark except for Toothless, shivering and tired and afraid.

Gobber hadn't exaggerated: the forge was freezing by now.

But then again, Toothless and I both knew what it was like to be cold, and as Toothless was the warmest creature I'd ever met (probably from all the fire-breathing he did) the temperature wasn't an issue.

Toothless curled back up on the wooden floor, looking up at me with wide eyes that I knew were begging me not to blame myself.

But how could I not?

I'd had such a huge hand in getting Toothless imprisoned that it was almost as if I'd locked his cell door myself.

I'd been such an idiot, such a fool, thinking we'd be okay so long as we had each other. And Dad ripped that away from me, that sense of security that I thought would last forever. I thought we'd never have to be apart.

I bit my lip as hot tears pricked at the corners of my eyes, threatening to slip down my cheek. They'd be dry by morning, so it wasn't like anybody would see, but still. I had to be strong. I had to be strong for Toothless. I couldn't break down.

I saw my dad's sneering, scarred face in the darkness as I lay back down, like a photograph that just wouldn't fade away, into the dark corner where I kept all my memories.

That was the one memory that never left me alone.

"\_What. Are. You. Doing?" Dad demanded, grabbing me by the collar of my shirt and physically throwing me down, prying me off of Toothless. "I mean, whatâ€¦|\_"

\_He began pacing back and forth, and I knew not to say anything. If I

kept my mouth shut, I might be able to show himâ€¦|\_

"\_Fatherâ€¦|" I began, but he turned on me angrily, not letting me finish.\_

"\_I mean...why did you have to do this, Hiccup?" Toothless wasn't there. In the years to come, I'd grow used to cold darkness and absolute aloneness, but right then, with Toothless being chained up outside where I could hear his pitiful moans that were so much like torture to me, I felt so naked, defenseless, alone.\_

\_Out there, it would take real effort to break me down.\_

\_In here, where Toothless wasn't, all it took was a single word, a harsh rejection. And I'd be shattered.\_

"\_Iâ€¦|Iâ€¦|" I had nothing to say. I was frozen and no matter how badly I wanted to speak, I couldn't because I was absolutely frozen and even if I wasn't, not all of the words in the world could mend what had been broken.\_

\_My father looked so disgusted with me, turning on me, yelling, yelling, yelling so loud. Everything was so loud in my ears.

—

"\_Iâ€¦|" I tried to speak, to interrupt him, but then he smacked me on the face and yelled out the terrible words I would never forget, not ever, and I would never forget how it felt when he struck me for the first time, though he would hit me many more times in the years to come.\_

I closed my eyes against it, resting my head on Toothless' back, trying to tell myself I was starting over, but tears seeped out from under my lids and rolled down my cheeks still.

I still remembered the way his fingers felt against my cheek, and the harsh red mark they left on my face. It was the mark that had once made all the villagers whisper.

After awhile, my marks were nothing new.

I knew I had scars and not just from my father's blows.

They existed all over my body, puckered, pink and orange burn marks, little white and pink lines come from a dagger that had once pierced my skin and drawn so much blood, laceration after laceration, bruise after bruise and drop after drop of blood until eventually I couldn't remember a time when I was completely unscarred.

The marks my dad left became as ordinary as the clothes on my back, just a feeling of moderate pain and then, after awhile, slipping into numbness or dull throbs.

Gobber had found a few of those scars last night, but only two or three â€" he'd barely scratched the surface.

"\_Hiccupâ€¦|what is this?" he pointed to a mark on my shoulder, the leftover welts from my last whipping. \_

"\_Oh," I shrugged, looking down at it. "Battle scars." I'd tried

making a joke out of it then, by saying, "Even I've fought a battle or two."\_\_

\_But Gobber hadn't looked amused. I probably should have thought up a smoother lie, because there was no way anybody could mistake the marks of a whip as "battle scars".\_\_

Suddenly, a loud roar sounded throughout the village and at the same moment, more roars echoed, bouncing around in the night.

The sky seemed to be filled with them. I peered out the window at the darkened sky, only to see dragons of all kinds, flying by the dozens towards the village.

People were streaming out of their homes, readying their weapons and shouting to wake up the people who were still sleeping.

I turned to Toothless, hoping my expression didn't give too much away. "C'mon, bud," I said.

Time to help the village.

## 9. Another Raid

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_\_

### Chapter 9: Another Raid

\*\*Alright, well, then here's chapter 9, "Another Raid", so named because that is the first line of dialogue within this chapter and because, simply, I had nothing else to call it. You get to see Astrid again, here, because basically Hiccup walked around having angst with Gobber and muttering darkly about how Stoick can't be trusted, but, that's another story, so I decided to throw Astrid in here as well :D I'm sorry about how terrible everything is in this chapter, though I do have reasonable confidence (or more like vague hope) that I kept people in-character and kept things realistic while handling the whole 'dragons befriend Vikings' thing. It's really hard for me to set up dragons as companions to the Vikings. I somehow always portray them as pets, even though I deeply despise that portrayal.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Another raid," one of the villagers muttered tensely when I got out there, tugging on my vest and stroking Toothless' head to make myself keep calm. His presence had a soothing effect on me that nothing else did and sometimes, I'd find the urge to pet him or whisper something to him, just to be sure he was still there.<p>

He was the only person who I trusted never to leave.

I spotted Gobber ambling sleepily out of his own house and heading to the forge as the dragons began landing and the chaos ensued.

Chief Stoick must not have told very many people about the plan for the dragon attacks, because almost nobody listened when he walked out of his hut to see the full-scale dragon attack and yelled, "Everybody, stop!"

A Monstrous Nightmare flew down next to me, chasing after a poor sheep that I stepped in front of, holding out a calming hand.

He hissed at me and began building up a fireball in his throat, whether to actually throw at me or just as a defense mechanism, I'll never know. I lowered my hand for a few seconds and when he relaxed, I brought it up again, but this time I didn't aim for his nose. I held it just above the sharp horn on his snout, showing him he could hurt me if he wished.

He gazed up at me suspiciously with his large yellow eyes, undecided on whether or not I could be trusted.

Toothless was tense, ready to fight if the black and red dragon in front of me decided I couldn't be trusted. I was tempted to withdraw my hand and put it on Toothless' nose to quiet him down, but I knew the only way to earn a dragon's trust was to show you weren't going to hurt him and that you weren't afraid of him, earning his trust and showing you had some in him as well.

If I drew my hand away now, it wouldn't exactly speak volumes for how much I trusted him not to rip my hand off.

His eyelids were getting lower and lower; he was clearly in a pleasant sort of daze, ignorant of the battle raging all around him as Stoick was calming the villagers down and yelling at them to follow my lead. I might be suspicious of him, but I had to admit, he was a great leader.

Under his instruction, the people were actually getting things done.

My arm was getting tired because of how long I held it out for, but I didn't care. If I could convince just this one dragon, then he could make all the differenceâ€|

I dropped my head and stared at the ground, waiting. It was a special move, the one that signified I had complete faith in the dragon in front of me, thinking he wouldn't hurt me. I'd only ever done this once, for Toothless, and never again, not for six years.

I felt the dry, scaly nose touch my hand, gently caressing my fingers and I raised my head, elated and pleased that I'd managed to convince the Nightmare that I wouldn't hurt him.

The villagers, meanwhile, were giving Stoick a hard time about following my lead, as none of them wanted to get that close to their dragons.

I kept my hand on the Nightmare's nose to keep him calm amidst all the yelling. "WILL YOU JUST DO AS I ASK?" raged Stoick and some of the villagers exchanged uncertain looks and tentatively approached other dragons, holding out their hands.

I could tell by the stiff, jerky way they moved that they were all scared silly and that the dragons would never trust them.

I patted the Nightmare's nose and he gazed contentedly at me as I walked away, back to help the other villagers.

He seemed to catch the scent of chaos, because he looked up curiously, realizing his fellow dragons were still attacking.

A curious sound built up in his throat, as if he were asking a question or about to let loose a roar.

Toothless stepped up to him and began making sounds back, which I'd discovered a while back was a dragon's way of communicating.

I felt a rush of gratitude towards Toothless, who I knew must be calming the Nightmare down as I approached another villager, stepping in front of the dragon she was dealing with. I turned to see Astrid, glaring at the Zippleback she was facing down.

"Whoa," I said. "Um, you might want to calmâ€"

"What are you doing?" she demanded of me, readying her axe for a fight.

"Wait, no, don't do that!" I said quickly, holding up my hands. The Zippleback, seeing she wasn't food for the queen, had flown off and was, I assumed, going after the sheep or maybe the chicken running around in a panic, having escaped the coop, I guessed.

"Didn't you hear what Stoick said?" I asked her.

"Yeah, he said something about following a lead," Astrid replied, frowning slightly. "But what does that have to do withâ€"

"Come here," I said to her, taking her hand and dragging her over to a Nadder.

## 10. Naturally Distrustful

**\*\*Chapter 10: Naturally Distrustful \*\***

**\*\*Um. Yes. Hello. Hi. Chapter 10. Okay. Here. No notes on plot or characterization, except, please don't get mad at Astrid. These are her mortal enemies. Don't think too badly of her. \*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>When we reached the Nadder, she yanked her hand back and glared at me. Ignoring her, I moved slowly over to the Nadder's side, allowing her slit pupils to follow me. I avoided her blind spot, being careful to show I was trustworthy as I hovered my hand an inch over her snout.<p>

"Are. You. Crazy?" Astrid hissed, glaring at me. She started forward as if to hit me, but suddenly a voice called out, "Fire!"

She groaned something to herself about Fire Brigade, and then ran to get a bucket of water like the others on that same job.



Looking around, I saw the others on Fire Brigade were the others I'd met in the Great Hall — Snotlout, the dark-haired, muscled guy who'd called me 'runt', the husky blonde boy who hadn't spoken much, and the brother and sister, who were currently fighting over who held the bigger bucket.

"Obviously, I'm the one holding the bigger one," the brother pointed out. "I mean, I am the guy, right?"

"Could've fooled me," smirked his sister, causing her twin to scowl as they soaked a nearby burning house.

I watched Astrid come up to them and splash it too. The smoke and fire mixed together, causing the wall of flame to rear up for a moment before sinking back down, and in that moment, the fire lit up her silhouette, illuminating her shining blonde hair and her grungy Viking clothes.

As she streaked past me to refill, I noticed scorch marks on her skirt.

I heard water splashing as Astrid filled up again, and as I turned to watch her, I felt somebody's shoulder collide with mine.

The impact knocked me to the ground, and a burning pain in my shoulder made itself known. Forcing myself back on my feet and glancing around, I saw Snotlout running after Astrid, into the night.

"Jerk," I muttered, brushing myself off. I turned to see the attacking dragons shaking out their wings and taking to the sky, their pupils going to slits.

As they all flew away, I heard villagers begin to murmur.

"What are they doing?" muttered one.

"They're flying away, look!"

"Impossible!"

"But they hardly stole any food!"

"That's weird."

"Have you ever seen a dragon do that before?"

"They did it together!"

"Like they all had the same thought together!"

I turned to Toothless, knowing what had happened. They had been called to the queen. I'd seen a similar expression on Toothless' face, but after a couple months of him never returning when she called, she stopped calling him, and I hadn't seen it for years.

I saw the chief muscling his way through the crowd, watching the dragons fly away. I exchanged glances with Toothless. The chief wouldn't know what was going on. I meandered up to him hesitantly and

when I spoke, my voice came out unnaturally quiet, unintentionally displaying my dislike for this. "Umâ€|sirâ€|" I began tentatively.

"What are they doing?" he demanded, turning on me.

"Iâ€|I think the queen called them," I explained in a whisper.

He turned to the watching Vikings and began saying something to them, but I didn't pay attention. I walked right back over to Toothless and absently scratched him under the chin and behind the ears, stroking his head.

After a few minutes, there was silence and as the Vikings turned to go, Stoick raised his voice slightly and his tone became just very slightly colder. "I would also like to point out that, if this had been a matter of life and death, almost all of you would be dead. You failed to obey my orders when I told you all to follow Hiccup's lead by approaching them in a non-threatening manner. This attack could have resulted in casualties and it would have been entirely the dead person's fault."

There was a long silence.

"Luckily," Stoick continued in a lighter tone, "nothing too terrible happened. This worked better than we could've hoped for. There have been no deaths, as far as I am aware, but there were a few burned buildings, which we will have to fix."

As the villagers began bustling away, a voice rose from out of the crowd. "The reason nobody listened to you, Stoick, was because we knew the truth!"

"Who would speak to the chief that way?" I wondered aloud to Toothless, as an elderly man with a staff that clinked and clanked due to old dragon teeth attached to the top stepped out from the rest of the crowd.

"What truth would that be, Mildew?" demanded Stoick, stepping forward slightly as well. He towered over Mildew by about a foot.

"This boy is not to be trusted!" Mildew yelled, pointing at me. "Think of it! A Night Fury on our shores! What would our ancestors say?"

"Mildew," Stoick began in a hard voice, brows drawing down, "that'sâ€"

"You're gonna regret this, Stoick!" Mildew interrupted. "Don't say I didn't warn you! This boy is not to be trusted!"

Stoick looked angrily after Mildew as the older man ambled away. The villagers parted, too, muttering darkly.

\* \* \*

><p>As the villagers left, Stoick turned to me. "I had a question for you."<p>

\_What a surprise.\_

"Oh, yeah?" I asked. Toothless was still there, nudging my palm nervously, sensing my distrust and feeling a fair amount of his own.

"How did you find out about this queen? I forgot to ask you that earlier."

I shrugged. "Toothless. He and I were flying andâ€¦" I stopped, hesitating, wondering if I should finish.

"And?" Stoick prompted. When it was clear I was debating on whether or not to lie, he added coaxingly, "You already have my word that I'll tell no oneâ€¦"

"That's not it," I replied, shaking my head. "I justâ€¦" I didn't want him getting any ideas.

"Then?" he asked.

"Toothless flew me to the nest." There.

\_Try to get something out of that, Stoick the Vast.\_

Stoick nodded, looking pensive, but not calculating. I breathed a sigh of relief. I'd done the right thing â€" this time.

"And that's where you saw the dragon queen for the first time?" he asked, bringing me sharply back to the present.

"Yep," I replied nonchalantly, waiting for him to speak.

"Hmm," he murmured.

There was a silence and for awhile, we stood there. We stood there so long that Stoick said, "Relaxing, isn't it?"

"What?" I demanded, turning to him, half-expecting to hear him say "silence is golden" or something else sarcastic like that.

\_Not everyone is you, Hiccup.\_

"Watching the sunrise," Stoick informed me. "Relaxing, isn't it?"

I lifted one shoulder and then let it drop. "I guess." I didn't mention I used to love watching the sunrise.

"I'm sorry about Mildew, by the way," he continued, not looking at me. He never once took his eyes off the sunrise.

I shrugged. I wanted to tell him Mildew had a point, that he was right, that I couldn't be trusted. I'd lied about everything since the day I'd come here. Something burned like acid in my throat, searing it. I swallowed, realizing it was guilt. "It's fine. I've heard worse."

He fixed his eyes on me and opened his mouth to speak. "I know this might seem like a strange question, butâ€¦"

"Okay, well, then, I'd better g-go to the forge!" I interrupted

quickly, unable to bear it. I had to stay on Berk until I'd fixed Toothless' tail. There was just no other way. Stoick was preparing to ask me a question about my origin, I just knew it. I couldn't tell him where I came from. The thought filled me with dread.

He stopped himself from speaking, and though his eyes had that cold, sad look in them again, he let me go.

\* \* \*

><p>"What did Stoick want with ya?" Gobber asked ten minutes later, as I tugged out my sketchbook and examined the near-finished prosthetic tail.<p>

"Just to ask me a question about dragons and their queen," I replied, squinting at my sketchbook. I was struggling to read the notes the eleven-year-old me had scrawled about prosthetic tails. "Oh, and to apologize about Mildew."

"Ach," Gobber snorted. "He's right on that one, lad. Don't listen to him. Mildew 'as never 'ad a kind word to say about anybody."

I shrugged. "It didn't bother me, honestly."

\_Because you and I both know it's true.\_

Gobber shrugged. "Doesn't matter, anyway, lad. It doesn't matter to us if you're not from around here. You're 'elpin' us, and we're grateful to ya for that."

There was a silence.

"And also, e's just a cranky old man," Gobber added.

I smiled, leaning down to pick up Toothless' damaged tail and pat his head affectionately. "Really? I sensed that."

Toothless gave Gobber an approving look at these last few words and then turned to me, playfully licking my fingers.

Gobber sent the dragon a wary glance. "Alright, but if he barfs up more fish, I'm so outta here."

I laughed.

## 11. Secrets

**\*\*Chapter 11: Secrets\*\***

**\*\*Uh...yeah...not real sure why I called it 'Secrets'. Anyway, though it might seem like mindless fluff between Toothless and Hiccup at the beginning, I actually have good reason for throwing that in there.\*\***

**\*\*Toothless was very protective of and defensive of Hiccup in the movie and the show, and, judging by what's happened to his human in this AU, Toothless is likely to be even more defensive of him than his canon self is. He's watched Hiccup suffer pretty gruesomely, and he has himself, resulting in the fact that when Hiccup gives the**

simple statement, 'I can't breathe' Toothless sees it as, 'he can't breathe because I'm suffocating him and I'm hurting him'. Not that he's stupid, but Toothless knows how physically very fragile Hiccup is, and will be careful not to overstep that, I imagine. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Things settled down for a few days â€" I worked on Toothless' tail often enough that by the day after the attack, it was almost finished and things were settling down.<p>

I examined it again as I buckled it on Toothless' tail, sitting back on my heels to take a breather as Toothless went in circles a few times, trying to catch sight of the tail, before just bringing it up close to his face and opening and closing it several times.

I smiled at his curiosity and he raced over to me, clearly wanting to go flying with me. "I don't know if that's such a great idea, bud," I admitted. "I don't know how well the people of Berk will take to a dragon in their skies, and we all know how well it worked out last time we were flying around these islands."

Toothless gave me a 'you're no fun' look, playfully pinning me to the ground and begging me silently, using only his big green eyes to try and convince me to go flying.

"Toothless," I sighed, "let me up, c'mon, I don't think we should."

He nudged me in the side.

"Toothless. Stop it," I told him, attempting to wriggle away. He nudged me in the other side, causing me to laugh, as he had hit a spot where I was ticklish.

"C'mon, stop," I chastised, trying to shove him up, but I was still a little weak from laughter and I failed.

It had been a long time since he'd heard me laugh, and he seemed proud of himself for achieving this, so he nudged me again, and I squirmed away, laughing and protesting breathlessly, "C'mon, Toothless, stop â€" no, no, \_stop\_ â€" I can't \_breathe,\_ " I told him, out of breath.

His green eyes widened and he immediately backed off, looking apologetic. I sat up and stroked his head. "S'okay, bud. I know you didn't mean to."

He nudged me under the chin with his nose, giving me a look full of concern. It had been a long time since I'd felt cared about or needed. I smiled down at him, scratching him under the chin and tickling him behind the ears to get him back for tickling me. "It's fine. Stop worrying."

He gave me a small smile, enjoying the fact that I looked happy. If it had been awhile since he'd heard me laugh, it had been eternity since he'd seen me happy. But then, it had been eternity since I'd seen him happy, too.

I heard voices coming from the main room of the forge, one I

recognized as Gobber and the other as Stoick.

Stoick taking time out of his day to talk to Gobber in the forge surprised me. If Gobber had a flaw, it was that he was a huge, and I mean huge, gossip. He stopped to chat with every person who came into the forge, no lie. Stoick struck me as a little more focused and less likely to get distracted with useless chatter "but then, things aren't always what they seem.

Who knew? They could've been talking about something really important in there.

I edged closer to the curtain, their voices floating over to me. It couldn't have been too important, I reasoned, because they certainly weren't troubling to keep their voices down.

"I know I'm right, Gobber!" Stoick was insisting. "I"

"Have you asked him the"

"He's sixteen. And even more than that, he didn't give me a chance to ask him it. But it's strange he's strange he's not right but I don't care! If it's true if he really is then I won't care."

"We'll see," Gobber replied curtly.

I shoved open the curtain, opening my mouth to ask what they were talking about when they suddenly both stopped talking, looking rather shifty.

It hit me, then: they had been talking about \_me.\_

But what were they doing saying stuff like that about me? I didn't even know what they were talking about.

"\_He's strange he's not right\_"

Toothless followed me out of the backroom and nudged me in the thigh, letting me know he was there.

\_Wow. Even the chief has picked up on you and your weirdness. Give up now, Haddock.\_

I swallowed and decided to break the awkward silence. "Uh I finished the tail."

\_Talk about wow. This is amazingly awkward. You should've just kept quiet, idiot.\_

"Oh! Well that's good, then, isn't it, Hiccup?" Gobber said, but he wasn't looking at me; he shot Stoick a look full of meaning.

"Yes. That's just grand," Stoick added awkwardly.

Desperate to get away from the tension I sensed mounting, I said quickly, "Do you mind if we try it out? Just a quick little flight around the island"

"No. Go on, Hiccup. Go on," Stoick answered, even though I'd been

directing my question at Gobber.

I nodded and raced out through the back door, breathing a little sigh of relief to be out in the open air, away from the chief and the blacksmith with their meaningful glances at each other and their huge white elephants of secrets.

## 12. No Holding Back

**\*\*Chapter 12: No Holding Back\*\***

**\*\*Um. So. Yeah. Here's chapter 12. I'm sorry about how short chapter 11 was, does this one make up for it? well, I'm gettin' off here, hopefully to work on 'Shattered' or this one or maybe even my Treasure Planet fic. It all depends, really :)\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Toothless was almost as eager as I was, skipping around so much I could barely even get on his back.<p>

"Slow down, bud, would ya?" I laughed. "I've got to get on your back to test it out, remember?"

He gave me a look, but he parked it and waited patiently for me to climb on. I patted his neck, fixing my foot in the pedal and opening and closing the tail fin several times to make sure it actually worked.

Toothless began running, spreading his wings and taking off just as we hit the edge of the ocean, soaring in graceful arcs through the blue, blue sky, going up and down and around, barely skimming the sea and getting dangerously close to every sea stack we passed, so close I could've reached out and touched the sea-weathered rock if I'd wanted to.

He was doing it to let off his feelings, I guessed. Whenever he was grounded for more than a day or so, he often got irritable and snappish even with me â€" luckily, he'd known the consequences of being in a bad mood this week and he'd resisted.

He blew a fireball at the open air, sliding left at the last second to avoid it, and then dropping down and going underwater, a slight tensing of the neck and shoulder muscles my only warning to hold my breath, close my eyes and pinch my nose.

When we resurfaced, I was soaking wet, but happier than I'd been in weeks â€" well, years, really.

It'd been such a long time since Toothless and I had flown, and we'd never flown like this, with him just blindly showing off his skills, not a care in the world. We'd always had to be careful, just in case we were spotted.

Well, not this time, I thought, pressing down harder on the tail fin. If he could do it, I could take it. I'd robbed him of his flight in the first place, so, no matter what trick he had up his sleeve, I was sure I could take it. He hadn't gotten to show off while flying for about six years now and while I knew it must seem like a couple days

to a dragon, I still wanted to make it up to him.

If he'd ever held back even once, I knew it was because of me.

So I leaned down and tightened my grip, whispering, "C'mon, Toothless," letting him know I was ready and that he could go crazy if he wanted.

After years of flying and hanging around Toothless in secret, it felt pretty damn great to just let myself go and let Toothless go crazy with his flight.

And go crazy he did.

He flew so high I was finding it hard to breathe, but I didn't mind because I had never felt so alive and I knew he was acutely aware of my human need for oxygen at some point, and that he would fly lower when he sensed me getting dangerously breathless.

Sure enough, after a few minutes, he dropped down lower, going into a vertical dive, hitting the water, stirring up waves with his belly and then swooping up again in a glorious arc, bringing small droplets of water with him.

He shook out his wings and balanced for a moment on a sea arch before swooping under it and spreading his wings to their full extent, slowing him down into a gentle glide.

After the brief adrenaline rush just seconds before, I was almost let down by our ordinary, everyday version of flight, the calmer and more secretive way of flying, the one that meant it'd be easier for us to land if we were spotted.

I inhaled deeply, letting the tangy, salty scent of the ocean fill my nose for a few seconds as Toothless began circling the sea arch, preparing for a truly spectacular maneuver.

I knew that if I wasn't there, we'd never head back to Berk, so I urged us to do so after about thirty or forty more minutes of us just goofing off out there, all alone.

Toothless reluctantly landed on one of Berk's many hills, and I just sat there on his back for a second or two, trying to catch my breath after that truly exhilarating flight.

"Toothless, bud," I whispered, stroking his head, "that was amazing."

He gave me a pleased look, as if to show his satisfaction with the way he'd flown today.

I clambered off his back and we began heading back for the forge, working hard to ignore the stares from passing villagers, the way they drew back slightly upon seeing Toothless, the way they whispered behind their hands as we passed. I guess it was lucky I'd be leaving soon — I'd never fit in here.

I let myself in through the back door, hearing voices as I walked inside. Not wanting to hear anything I wasn't supposed to, but also not wanting to interrupt, I skulked in the backroom for a few seconds



before realizing they were shouting " it was most likely a personal argument, I'd better get out"

And then I heard it.

That old man, Mildew or whatever he was called, was yelling at the chief. "We won't put up with this for much longer, Stoick!" he threatened.

I jerked back the curtain and stepped into the main room, figuring this couldn't be too personal if Mildew was involved. "Hey, guys," I said awkwardly, realizing it wasn't just Mildew, Stoick and Gobber " it was about ten or fifteen other villagers as well, all of whom drew back and hissed at seeing Toothless.

Toothless stepped in front of me protectively, but I didn't think it was my safety that needed to be watched right now. I patted Toothless' head and stepped slightly in front of him, successfully telling him it was my turn to keep him safe without insulting him or indicating he needed to be kept safe or that he couldn't defend himself.

Not that I was defenseless, either, but rob me of Toothless and my knives and yeah. I pretty much am. Not to mention, if you come after Toothless, I don't give a damn whether I have my knives or not, \_ I\_ come after \_you.\_

"Uhwhat's going on?" I asked, hoping to inject new life into the conversation.

"Get into the back room, Hiccup," Gobber advised.

"Why?" I asked.

"Just get in there," he told me in a voice that couldn't be argued with.

I slowly backed into the other room, behind the tattered red curtain, but I could still hear every word they were saying in the other one.

"Mildew, that is enough," Stoick snapped coldly from the next room. "This boy has given you no reason to distrust him. He has given no one a reason to distrust him. In fact, he is \_helping\_ us. Let it be."

Mildew was silent.

I sighed, leaning against the wall of the forge, the familiar searing feeling of guilt starting in my throat. Toothless gave me a look of concern.

"I'm fine, bud," I assured him. "I just" I glanced uncertainly at the curtain separating me from the villagers and Mildew and Stoick and Gobber " it had always been this way, an invisible barrier between the rest of the village and me and Toothless.

"\_He has given no one a reason to distrust him." Feeling guilty, yet, Haddock? Hear them in there? Hear that chief that you lied to sticking up for you?\_"

"Shut up," I whispered to myself. "I had to do it, alright? I don't owe these people one thing."

I couldn't believe I was arguing with myself â€" and, even worse, that I was in danger of losing. I shook my head, hoping to clear it, and turned to Toothless in desperation. "D'you think I should tell them the truth or not?"

Toothless wouldn't meet my eye â€" a sure sign he was going to tell me something he was sure I wasn't going to like.

"Toothless?" I pressed, kneeling down next to him and gently scratching him under the chin, hoping to get him to look at me. It worked, but his green eyes were so clouded with concern that I felt bad for making him, so I stopped and glanced away, towards the wooden floor instead.

He was silent, no moans or croons indicating he had something to say, so I began speaking instead. "I justâ€¦I'm not sure." I began hesitantly. "I meanâ€¦this villageâ€¦this chiefâ€¦he's allowed me to stay here, and the blacksmith has allowed me to use his tools and they're actually listening to me and accepting help from meâ€¦" my voice cracked on that last sentence and Toothless nuzzled my hair with his nose, moaning softly.

"I don't know, Toothless," I whispered, covering my face with my hands, too confused to think. "I justâ€¦I feel bad having to lie to themâ€¦you know I don't lie to people, not without good reasonâ€¦I lie to save livesâ€¦r-right, Toothless?"

Toothless darted a glance at me and then shook his head, fixing me with an unavoidable stare that clearly read, \_No, Hiccup. You need to tell them the truth. You at least owe it to Gobber and maybe Stoick, too.\_

I dropped my hands from his chin and sighed, drawing my knees up to my chest. "And what if they kick me out, then, huh? Orâ€¦" I swallowed, forcing myself to speak. "What if they do worse? What if they separate us and try to k-kill you or something?"

\_Hiccup, \_Toothless fixed me with that green gaze again, \_you're overreacting.\_

"I don't think so," I told him. "I think I'm doing exactly what's right by lying to them. Something horrible will happen if I tell them the truth. Hooligans hate Outcasts!"

"Show's over, Hiccup," Gobber poked his head inside the backroom. "And did ya say Outcasts, lad? Boy, I'd love one right nowâ€¦it's been too long since Alvin the Treacherous attacked lastâ€¦I'd love to spill some Outcast bloodâ€¦"

I sent Toothless a meaningful look.

"You tell me if I'm talkin' too much, sonâ€¦" Gobber continued.

"Hey, Gobber?" I cut across him and his long-winded reminisce of his last fight with an Outcast. "What was all that fuss about,

anyway?"

Gobber sighed, putting down his weapon. "Mildew," he explained hoarsely, wrinkling his nose. "Well, ya can't believe anything that old man says, butâ€"

"Gobber, will you just tell me what he said?" I interrupted.

"He's just trying to get you thrown off the island," Gobber admitted. "But it's alright. Stoick's put a stop to it. Oh, and that reminds me," he added, "I often eat dinner at Stoick's house â€" I'm sure he wouldn't mind ya taggin' along."

I shook my head quickly. "Oh, no, I'm fine, reallyâ€"

"Ya can't tell me ya like the hustle an' bustle of the Great Hall," Gobber said.

"Well, no, I don't," I admitted. "But I'll survive."

Gobber shrugged, turning back to the weapon he was fixing. "Just a thought."

"Yeah." I shrugged. "I'll be fine, though." I raised an eyebrow at the large pile of weapons that still needed to be repairedâ€|it was the least I could doâ€|

I sent Gobber a look. "You need some help with those?"

### 13. Guilt

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 13: Guilt

\*\*Uh...yeah. Not sure why I called it 'Guilt'. It's sort of angsty, sort of not, very OOC, at least on Hiccup's part. Thanks for all your reviews, follows and favorites!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I heard Gobber noisily entering the forge before I saw him, though this might have been due to the fact that my head was bent over Toothless' prosthetic tail and I was buckling it on him again.<p>

Roughly, it was good enough to fly on, but there was always room for improvement, especially since the last time I'd worked on this thing, I'd been eleven.

Toothless licked my hand and fixed me with a piercing stare that read, \_you need to tell somebody and soon.\_

"I will, alright?" I muttered, not taking my eyes off his tail. I couldn't tell anyone. I would've thought Toothless smart enough to know that, especially as he'd never seemed too concerned with doing what was morally right before. "Justâ€¦give me time. I'm gonna try and show them they can trust me first."

\_But they can't.\_

"Right," I mumbled to myself. "Thanks for the vote of confidence."

\_Anytime.\_

I sighed, my fingers slipping on the buckle of his tail. While I was here and helping with the dragons, I was starting to think I should try and recreate the riding vest, too.

Dad had taken that from me, along with the prosthetic tail fin. He hadn't worked out exactly what the riding vest or the tail fin did, but he worked out enough to guess that it was the two essential tools to flight.

I heard the curtain rustling behind me, but I didn't turn to look until Gobber's shadow fell over my work. I glanced up.  
"Yeah?"

Gobber bent down to examine what I was doing and suddenly I felt the sudden â€" and very childish â€" urge to hide what I was doing, just in case.

Gobber had left me alone in the forge to talk to somebody outside, and then he'd moseyed back in, complained that we should eat dinner, fixed the few leftover weapons, told me we should eat dinner, got an order for a new axe and then moseyed on in here to see what I was doing.

Dusk was falling now, but I didn't want to bother to stop working on the tail to eat something, though my stomach was starting to get louder about its desire for food.

Gobber was still looking at the prosthetic tail and suddenly said, "This is some fine craftsmanship you've got here. Where did you learn so much about blacksmithing, lad?"

I shrugged. "Eh."

"It must've taken a very skilled Viking to teach you how to do stuff as good as this."

\_Here's your chance. Just say it. Just say, 'I learned it from Outcast Island.' C'mon. Just say it, why don't you?\_

"Iâ€¦uhâ€¦" I hesitated for a fraction of a second, half-tempted to listen to the voice and half-tempted to go against it. "Before I began living on my own with Toothless, I lived on an island with the Peaceables," I lied. "We never did anything like fighting dragons or fighting other Vikings, butâ€¦" I shrugged. "You know how it is."

"Hmmâ€¦" Gobber murmured. For some reason, he looked as though he

didn't really believe my story.

\_Remember that verse 'oh, what a tangled web we weaâ€'\_

"Why didn't you tell me that before?" Gobber asked suddenly, successfully cutting the voice in my head off.

"Didn't seem important," I shrugged.

\_You mean you hadn't reached that far in the lie yet. You're gonna regret this, Hiccup. After awhile, you're gonna be so tangled up, you're not even gonna know what the truth is anymore. \_

I ignored that irritating little voice and said, "I was thinking of trying out the tail for a few minutes, because I just did some improvements. Do you mind?"

"Nah," Gobber shook his head. "You go on, lad."

For some reason, I had a feeling that he was going to realize something I didn't want him to if I left.

But then, I knew that irritating little voice in my head had a point. After awhile, I'll have lied so much, my web will be too tangled for even me to undo.

\* \* \*

><p>When I got back from the flight, I saw Gobber was shielding his eyes against the setting sun and smiling proudly over at me as I clambered off Toothless, tripping a couple of times.<p>

I brushed the dirt out of my hair and, as I stood up, pushing myself up onto my hands and knees, it suddenly occurred to me how long it had been since I'd washed.

I suppose it didn't really matter, since we were Vikings, after all, and Vikings didn't really strive to keep themselves clean, but that was another thing that made me so different from all the other Vikings: I liked being clean. I liked being outside, and I liked dirt, and I liked the woods just as much as any other Viking â€" in fact, maybe a little more than most â€" but in my opinion, dirt should stay where it was: on the ground, and not on you.

I made a mental note to go into the forest and see if I could find a lake to wash up in tomorrow, maybe.

"We should get somethin' to eat," Gobber commented, looking down at me. "You gotta be starvin'."

I shrugged. "I'm alright. I'll grab something really quick from the Great Hall and then I'll probably just go back into the forge and keep working â€" if that's okay," I added quickly.

It was Gobber's place after all, and if he didn't want me in there, I guess I shouldn't be in there.

"That's fine," Gobber shrugged. "You know, if you do want to tag along to eat dinner with Stoick and I in his house, you can."

I shot him a look. "Why do you keep offering me that?"

"I'm just offerin' because 1. I hate the Great Hall just as much as you seem to and 2," he held up a second finger on his real hand, "I know you don't really like bein' around people here, and the only people you know on this island are gonna be in the chief's hut today. I just thought you might like some company."

I deliberated for a moment, unsure whether to accept or not before a thought occurred to me. "I'm sure the chief would just love you inviting outsiders to his house willy-nilly."

Gobber chuckled. "Nah, Stoick likes you. He reckons you're a good person and he can see you respect him."

This was surprising, as my respect for a chief was normally limited, after the way my own father had treated me.

\_No. Hey. Stop. Starting over, remember?\_

"The chief would get a real surprise if I showed up with you," I pointed out.

"I told him I was gonna invite ya," Gobber replied, waving a hand dismissively. "I think everybody needs someplace ev'ry once in a while, don't ya think?"

I didn't think he meant the chief's house. I considered it for a long moment. It wasn't about the Great Hall anymore.

"\_He reckons you're a good person and he can see you respect him." Oh, yeah, you respect him enough to lie to him?\_

Guilt twisted my insides violently. I sucked in a long, slow breath and, desperate to escape the haunting voice, I said, "Alright. I'll come."

I didn't care anymore if Stoick didn't want me there and told me to go. Anything to shut out the voice, I thought.

Talking to people shut out the voice, because in the silence, it seemed so, so much louder.

## 14. Trolls and Other Stories

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 14: Trolls and other stories

\*\*Yeah. Er...here's the next part. I'm looking for a title...a better one...my eyes really hurt...anyway, I just rewatched Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix while munching on a slice of cheese pizza, and pizza and Harry Potter both make me insanely happy, combined with

the fact that I got this written today, and this weekend wasn't half-bad. I'm not as fond of this chapter as I was the last thirteen, but this is the way it works, is that I have to write a few chapters I either don't like too well or that I honestly hate so much I'd like to throw in the fire before letting anybody see them, and then I feel better. xD then I can always write better chapters after that, or at least I hope I can, although by that time, I've begun to despise the story. Anyway, I'm done rambling.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"So, how did you two even become friends, anyway?" I asked, eyes shifting between Stoick and Gobber. It had been the right decision to come here: talking to them <em>had <em>successfully kept the guilt away. "You two don't seem like the type to have your paths cross."

"Oh, this is a good one," Gobber looked amused. "Do you want to tell this one, Stoick, or should I?"

"You can," Stoick replied, getting up and ladling a second helping of stew into his own bowl. "Do you want any?" he added to me.

I shook my head. "That's alright."

"I do," Gobber chipped in.

"Get it yourself," Stoick responded and Gobber dragged himself out of his chair and began doling some more stew out into his own bowl.

It was clear from the way they interacted that they'd been friends for years; they had already insulted each other several times by now, but as neither of them seemed to be taking it seriously, I concluded their friendship had the freedom of speech with it.

Gobber finished ladling stew into his bowl and only spoke when he had come back to the table with it and seated himself. "Well, there was a celebration goin' down in the Great Hallâ€|I knew what it was for, all the villagers knewâ€|"

"But some of us," Stoick interrupted, glancing at Gobber with both amusement and exasperation in his features, "remained ignorant of exactly who it was for."

"â€|there was a really pretty woman there," Gobber said reminiscently, gazing into space, as if seeing the scene all over again. "Well, they coulda told us that the celebration for the chief pickin' a wife meant that the woman I was chatting up \_was\_ his wife."

"Ooh." I winced, glancing from Stoick to Gobber.

Stoick was smiling contently again, but there was something bittersweet about it and the cold, sad look that constantly decorated his features had not quite left his eyes.

So, stupid insensitive me, I blurted out, "What happened to her? Your wife? Is she away on a quest?"

The Vikings with the fighting spirit that can't ever be squashed out

of them never stay at home much and often go on quests, seeking battles and bloodshed and the fresh ocean air.

We had a few Questors like that on Outcast Island, but my dad was never one of them. Being the chief of Outcast Island, he often told me, was adventure enough.

Well, I could certainly see why now.

What will all these wars Outcast Island fought and all the blood feuds we declared and got declared on us, it was no surprise why Dad had liked the life of it so much. He was a fighter, and the Viking blood ran thick in his veins. He didn't like the peaceable life certain other tribes practiced, like the Peaceables, or the Grim-Bods, or the Bashem-Oiks.

The sad look in Stoick's eyes seemed to grow more intense as he stared at me and eventually, thank Odin, he looked away and spoke in a strangely constricted and very sad, almost angry, voice.  
"No."

"Thenâ€¦" I began, but then I stopped. There was an odd atmosphere about the room, as if a horrible story was about to be told.

"She died." Stoick said the words in a clipped, nearly emotionless voice, as if saying them made him want to cut out his own tongue.

"Oh." I drew a sharp breath, and then immediately felt terrible for the Viking chief. "Iâ€¦I'm so sorryâ€¦Iâ€¦Iâ€¦"

Stoick slowly put a hand up for quiet and at last I sputtered myself into silence.

"It's alright." He told me, still in that emotionless voice. "You had no way of knowing."

I glanced down at the table, struggling to think of something to say that didn't sound insensitive or idiotic, but thankfully, Gobber tactfully changed the subject. "Maybe we should tell the boy about' tha' time we went fishingâ€¦"

The sadness in Stoick's eyes did not entirely vanish, but he relaxed a little, listening attentively, maybe a little too attentively for somebody who's already been there, to Gobber's story.

"â€¦and that's why trolls are attracted to watering holes!" Gobber finished proudly, crossing his arms and leaning back in his chair, looking as if he'd just won a heated debate beyond all possible dispute.

"Waitâ€¦trolls?" I asked. I'd been watching Stoick and now that Gobber's story brought me back to earth, I realized what creature he had been talking about.

"Yeah! Weren't you listening?"

Stoick made an irritated noise in the back of his throat. "They're not \_real\_,\_ Hiccup."



"They steal your socks andâ€"

"They're completely bogus; Gobber's only teasing youâ€|"

"â€"but only the left ones! I wonder what that's about." Gobber paused, looking thoughtful.

"â€|Gobber's only pretending, they're not realâ€|"

"Why do they steal the left socks?" I asked, ignoring Stoick.

"No idea!" Gobber spread wide his hands, looking as confused as I felt. "I jus' woke up one morning and all my left socks were gone! I wondered where they all went and so I asked my brother, the one who wears his beard in those girly little ringlets, I've told you about himâ€|"

I nodded. I remembered the story about Ringlet Beard Brother. Gobber had told it to me over supper. "He was the one who always wandered around with a sheep?"

"No," Gobber shook his head, "tha' was me sister, Big Berthaâ€|I named a catapult after her." He looked very pleased with himself.

I smiled absently back, privately thinking that having a catapult named after me would cause more embarrassment and derisive laughter than pride and honor.

Gobber continued talking about trolls and catapults and sisters and then launched into a story about a dragon called a "Boneknapper" that had recently set his house on fire, and that stole bones to build its coat of armor.

I cocked an eyebrow. "A Boneknapper?"

"They exist!" Gobber insisted defensively. "I'm tellin' ya, they're as real as you or me or a troll!"

"Very nonexistent, then," Stoick said snappishly.

Gobber rolled his eyes. "Doesn't know what he's saying. When your left socks disappear, Stoick, you'll know who did it!"

I laughed lightly as Toothless looked up at me and blinked his large green eyes sleepily. \_These Vikings are crazy, \_his expression read, \_now that we've eaten, let's get the heck out of dodge and get some sleep.\_

He was curled up next to the table with an empty basket that had previously been holding his supper of about a dozen fish. It was surprising that Stoick had agreed to let Toothless in his house, but Toothless was a ways away from the table, and farther away from the other two than from me.

I scooted my chair out closer to him and stroked his head gently, smiling down at him as I did so, attempting to stifle a yawn. Sleep did sound really appealing right about now, but I wanted to hear the end of Gobber's story and besides that, I didn't want to be rude.

"Oh, look at the time," Stoick interrupted Gobber's tirade, glancing out the window and then stealing a glance at me. I don't suppose I looked alert, seeing as I was mid-yawn and my eyes were half-closed.

Gobber threw Stoick an annoyed look. "Stoickâ€|I was in the middle of telling the lad a storyâ€|"

"You can finish it tomorrow," Stoick said. "Get the bowls. I got them last time."

"This is how you treat your guests?" Gobber said in mock outrage, leaning over me to pick up my empty bowl.

"I can get them," I offered, jumping up, but Gobber shoved me back down.

"Nah. Stay seated, lad. We'll make you get 'em next time." He chuckled lightly and disappeared into the kitchen.

"I saved you from the ending of that particular story," Stoick muttered quickly under his breath to me. "But you might not be so lucky next time."

I grinned. "His stories aren't that bad. They're actually pretty interesting."

Stoick shook his head, as if he were questioning my sanity. Then he opened his eyes and smiled. I noticed the sad, cold something in his eyes had vanished for the time being, but I knew better than to point this fact out. No need to be insensitive or sound crazy. "What kind of stories have you heard, then?"

"Well, I've never heard about trolls stealing left socks," I admitted. "But those stories about bloody battles are a little overdone with us Vikings anyway, don't you think?"

The corners of Stoick's eyes crinkled when he smiled.

As Gobber walked back in the room, I stood up from the table. Toothless raised his head, licking my palm and getting up on his feet, too.

I noticed the cold, hard wall of distrust that made me keep my fists clenched and made my heart throw itself against my ribcage every time I was near Stoick had vanished.

Gobber began making his way to the door and as he did, I turned back to Stoick. "Thank you for having us over for dinner tonight, sir."

Stoick smiled at me again, but his expression grew a tad somber before he rested a large, beefy hand on my shoulder, looking concerned. "Look after yourself, alright, Hiccup?"

"Iâ€|sure, Iâ€|what?" I asked, completely caught off-guard.

"Just look after yourself, alright?"

"Umâ€|alright," I said nervously, unsure what to think. Somehow, it

just didn't seem in Stoick's nature to warn everybody who passed through to look after themselves. Then again, we were Vikings. Looking after ourselves should be second nature.

\_But this is you, Hiccup.\_

I shook it off and raced after Gobber out the door, Toothless following me.

## 15. Conversations at Sunrise

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 15: Conversations at Sunrise

\*\*Guhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, what's with my sudden fascination of titling chapters 'Conversations...' and then have 'at sunrise' or 'on bridges' or something, depending on where they are :P\*\*

\*\*Anyway, uh, next chapter is mild fluff with a dash of humor to make all the angst of the next few chapters more bearable. It's not as if I've got something huge planned, though the happier scenes are coming and then they're going to be DESTROYED SO MERCILESSLY THAT HICCUP WILL NEVER REMEMBER WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE HAPPY BECAUSE HIS BLEEDING SOUL WAS CRUSHED AAAAAAAAANGST\*\*

\*\*\*coughs\* I'm sorry. I'll get off now.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Night was falling rapidly by the time we'd made it into the forge and Gobber had left us alone for the night. I was exhausted, but I didn't want to sleep. I knew I had to, though.<p>

A sleep-deprived Viking, especially one who hangs around a dragon, is never a good idea.

I didn't want to sleep " I didn't want to see my dad in my dreams, not again. I blew out a long, low breath, glancing over at Toothless, who was already settled down for the night. I was using his back for a pillow again.

I lay my head back against him and he glanced up at me, crooning in a worried sort of way.

"I'm fine, Toothless," I said, smiling at him. His mother-hen tactics were at times endearing and at times downright irritating. "You can go to sleep."

But we both knew he wouldn't sleep if I didn't. Even if, in sleep, I succumbed to nightmares and visions of my dad, Toothless would be able to sleep then, because I was there beside him, breathing in and out and away, far away from Outcast Island.

\* \* \*

><p>My dreams that night were disturbing at the very least. Dad morphed into Gobber who morphed into Stoick, who was far away from me but kept yelling across the gap, "Look after yourself, now, Hiccup! Look after yourself, now!"<p>

Just like in real life, his warnings made no sense in my dreams, either.

When I woke up, I glanced immediately around for Toothless, and only being able to breathe freely when my fingers had found his scaly head and he had made a sleepy noise halfway between a moan and a yawn that I took to mean, 'I'm fine, Hiccup. Shut up and go back to sleep'.

Gray dawn light was starting to stream into our window, and so I stood up and stretched, opening the back door of the forge and stepping out to take a few lungfuls of early autumn air before doing anything else.

I used to love watching the sunrise when I was younger.

Back when I was ten, I remember being the earliest riser in our village, just so I could see the sunlight throwing everything into sharp contrast, watching this grayish light throwing faint, blurry shadows on the walls of my bedroom as I watched it through the window.

Some days, as I sat there, I would think about my plans for the day, or, as I got older, I began thinking of what Toothless and I were gonna do, or how much fun trying out the newest prosthetic tail fin and saddle was going to be.

Not that falling off a dragon that's a hundred feet in the air, breaking your arm and having to hobble back to your village and meekly tell your dad you "tripped over a rock" was \_fun.\_

I enjoyed the flight itself, and Toothless seemed patient and amused, content to watch me fail over and over again.

And when I'd finally found the tail-saddle-harness combo that worked, he seemed content to try that out, too, even though he knew one or both of us was most likely going to end up hurt from it.

I found out a lot of things thanks to Toothless â€" like how much of a difference one single person can make in your life, if you just give them the power to change it.

I heard the earliest of birds chirping and tweeting from trees behind the forge, and as I smiled up at those trees, I saw Astrid walking up the street, heading unmistakably either for the forge or the trees behind it.

I was willing to bet it was the second one and sure enough, when she saw me, she came around the back of the forge and placed a hand on her hip. She was holding an axe in one hand and two halves of a broken spear in the other. "Is Gobber here?"

"No," I responded, standing up and dusting myself off. "Not yet."

She blew out an annoyed breath and swiped her bangs out of her eyes. Her eyes were pretty, I noted, a soft, oceanic color. She'd be prettier, though, if she didn't look so irritated all the time. Even now, as she looked down at me unsmilingly, she was stunning. She sat down on the steps and so I resumed my place beside her.

"This is a bit early for you to be here," I commented, gesturing to the sunrise.

There was a silence and I wouldn't have blamed her for getting up and walking away right there. Unfortunately, I had always been awkward, and the only other thing I could possibly talk about to entertain her until Gobber came was the weather, and just as I opened my mouth to start babbling mindlessly about that, she spoke. "That was crazy, thatâ€¦stuff a few days ago." She darted a suspicious glance up at me, as if running through the events in her mind again.

"Oh." I remembered how she'd yelled at me when I'd tried to introduce her to the Nadder. "Yeah."

"Tell me, do you do that kind of thing for fun or were you trying to get yourself and me killed?" she asked, and there was definitely no humor in her tone.

"You were perfectly safe. She wasn't even paying attention to the other dragons," I replied coldly, hoping it would shut her up.

Some people were just too stubborn.

The back door opened behind us and Toothless came racing out, in the little space between us on the steps. I could tell he was trying to be gentle, but gentle and playful rarely ever go hand-in-hand with him, and he ended up scooting Astrid by a few feet and knocking me over.

Astrid stood her knuckles white on the handle of her axe. "Hey, Gobber."

Looking around, I saw Gobber was the one who'd opened the door, standing in the doorway and watching Toothless yawn and stretch, reminding me forcibly of a tired kitten.

She raced around to the other side of the forge and just before Gobber disappeared into the building himself, he gave me a thumbs-up.

I stared after him, confused. I turned to Toothless. "What?"

Toothless had stopped stretching and was curled up next to me on the steps. He lifted his head and glanced back at Gobber. \_'I have no idea'.\_

Then, he shifted and lifted his eyes to mine again, communicating only through his expressions. \_'Well, okay, I do have some idea, but I know you better than that'.\_

"What do you mean?" I asked, crossing my arms and waiting for him to answer.

He didn't respond. The conversation was clearly over.

Blowing out a frustrated breath, I uncrossed my arms and leaned back on the steps, watching the sky turn from silvery gray to deep blue.

"I really like this place, Toothless," I said at last. He lifted his head, listening. "I mean, I know it's not ideal, and I know we're only gonna stay until we get your tail fixed and help with the dragons, but I really do like this place."

Toothless made a small noise in the back of his throat; a noise that I didn't understand was a warning until too late.

I fell back on the wooden steps as the sky slowly changed colors, from gray to blue, to pink and purple, to pale cerulean.

## 16. An Easy Day

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 16: An Easy Day

\*\*Well, this chapter took quite a lot out of me, particularly that beginning scene xD BUT, I'm reaching the 'everything's happy' point and :D I'm loving it! Also, I'm reading this awesome book, so that could be making me happy, too :-D It's on Egyptian mythology and it's fascinating! Although, warning, I also checked out Greek and Roman and Norse mythology, so if I find something really good in the Norse mythology book that I want to see happen, random stuff might get thrown into this fic, okay? :D \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Gobber's awkward thumbs-up was explained some ten minutes later, when Astrid had left and he was fixing her father's spear for her and I was busily sharpening an axe.<p>

Over the chinking and grinding noises coming from the grindstone, Gobber began in a hesitant sort of way, though I wasn't sure why, "Soâ€|you and Astrid, huh?"

I wasn't really sure what he meant, but, unwilling to admit this, I merely shrugged, deciding to answer without answering. "You know how it is."

"No, I don't," Gobber responded, glancing up momentarily from the spear to study me as sparks flew from the grindstone. "Actually, I want to hear how this happened."

"Um, nothing really happened," I replied, setting down the axe and deciding to finish sharpening it later, once I'd explained everything to Gobber.

Back on Outcast Island, Ketil had never been much of a talker and I couldn't often work and talk on the same time.

Gobber's brows knitted in confusion. "Waitâ€|what?"

"Nothing really happened," I repeated. "We just sort ofâ€|talked."

"Is that whenâ€|?"

"Yeah."

"Oh." Gobber looked pleased. "This'll piss off Snotlout like you wouldn't believe." He chuckled lightly before adding, "But tha's okay, they were ne'er a good match anyway. She'd had to have settled down with him eventually without you around."

Now I was the one confused. "Umâ€|what are you talking about?"

"You and Astrid?" Gobber offered, adding a questioning tone to the end.

"Yeah, but you started talkingâ€|" my voice trailed off as it all suddenly clicked in my brain. \_"Soâ€|you and Astrid, huh?" "She'd had to have settled down with him eventually without you around." \_ "Odin, NO!" I yelled so loudly that Gobber jumped and dropped one half of the broken spear, whirling around to face me.

"Lad, what's wrong?" he demanded, rushing over to me and looking around for any signs of injury or attackers.

"Nothing's wrong," I said, breathing heavily, as though I'd run a marathon with that epiphany. "Iâ€|uhâ€|" I cleared my throat awkwardly, trying to think of the best way to phrase this. "Um, Gobber, Astrid and Iâ€|it's not what you think, just so you know."

Gobber winked. "Sure."

"No, really," I explained, feeling myself beginning to blush. Heat was already creeping up my neck and flushing my cheeks. "Iâ€|well, we were just talking and then she asked where you were. In fact, we nearlyâ€|" I trailed off, unwilling to voice the fight. "Well, we just weren't getting along when you came around. But I promise you, we're nothing like that."

"Hmm," Gobber didn't seem too convinced, but thankfully, he ceased conversation about the vastly complex (for me, anyway) opposite sex and instead began talking about what an easy day it looked like us for in the forge, provided we didn't get too many big orders by lunchtime.

I nodded, barely listening to him, picking up the axe and beginning to work on it again.

Sure enough, the day proved easy, and we were done with work by

noon.

"We can squeeze in an early lunch and then, I think, we can come back, just in case we get new orders," Gobber said, looking out the window at the pale blue sky.

Toothless nudged me in the side, trying to get my attention. I glanced down at him to see him pleading with me to go flying.

"Toothless and I are gonna go flying before lunch, if that's okay with you," I told him. I didn't bother thinking about asking the chief if it was okay, because I was assuming that since I'd gotten the green light last time, I was going to get it every time.

Gobber nodded. "A'right. I'll be in the Great Hall when you get back."

Just before he left, he poked his head in again to add, "Oh, right, speaking of meals, you should come to Stoick's for dinner again."

And with that, he was gone, not even giving me a chance to answer.

But I didn't mind. Toothless and I exchanged excited looks and within seconds, we were both out the door and we were running up the grassy hill to a good take-off point.

I fixed my boot in his pedal and clicked the tail fin open and then shut again, testing to make sure it wouldn't come loose at the worst time.

When I was satisfied, we were off, soaring through the air and into the bright sky.

\* \* \*

><p>When I got back, I went to the Great Hall to grab something to eat, but when I realized Gobber wasn't there, I just grabbed a couple fish for Toothless and a chicken leg for myself, gnawing on it on the way back to the forge, where I'd left Toothless. The poor guy had to eat later than I did, because I doubted that the people of Berk would take well to a dragon calmly munching cod in their dining hall.<p>

I entered the forge the back way, leaving Toothless the fish and sitting down next to him as he began to eat them, and as I did, I heard a sort of off-key humming from the next room.

I peered in the crack between curtain and wall, and sure enough, there was Gobber, doing an odd sort of dance around the forge as he worked, humming a strange song to himself.

Halfway through the tune, he stopped and, just as I expected him to start over, he burst into song. \_"I've got my axe and I've got my mace and I love my wife with the ugly face, I'm a Viking through and through!" \_

I pushed the curtain open wider, smiling to myself and shaking my head. "Hey, Gobber."



"Hey, lad," Gobber nodded, seemingly unabashed at having been discovered singing in such a fashion. "You're back early. Did you eat?"

Then he caught sight of the chicken leg in my hands. "Whyâ€|?"

I shrugged. "Nobody who I liked was there. And besides, I don't like eating around people. Or being around people at all, really. So I decided to just finish my food here."

Gobber shook his head a little as I tore off another bite of chicken with my teeth. "Great manners," he commented dryly, eyes fixed on me.

I shrugged. "Last I checked, Vikings didn't have manners."

"Eh. You got a point there, lad." Gobber amended, and he turned his attention back to the rusty axe he had on his worktable.

"Any new orders?" I asked, deciding to change the subject.

"Besides this axe? Nothing so far." Gobber sighed a little. "It's days like today I rue being the village blacksmith."

"Why?" I asked.

"Cuz' now I'm stuck in the forge," Gobber responded, resting the axe on the table and coming to sit down on a wooden stool in front of the red curtain.

"Boredom builds character," I replied, taking a seat on the floor and tearing off the last bite of chicken and wiping my mouth on my sleeve. "'Sides, it shouldn't be that bad. The way you act, I'd think you know the cure for everything."

Gobber grimaced. "Not for this type of boredom, lad. Maybe you could help with that."

"I'm not going to go door-to-door and beg people to get their weapons sharpened," I responded firmly. "I have \_some\_ dignity."

To my surprise, Gobber chuckled. "That wasn't what I was going to suggest," he admitted.

"Oh." I lay back on the wooden floor. "Okay. What were you gonna say?"

"I was gonna say we could do something to while away the hours," Gobber replied, shrugging. "I mean, we could talk or play a game or just do something. I've never had anyone here in the forge with me before." He grinned widely. "Should be an adventure."

"Just promise me you'll never try to bring up my love life again," I told him.

He laughed, reaching over to gently ruffle my hair with his real hand. "A'right, lad. I promise."

\* \* \*

><p>A few hours later, as dusk was beginning to fall, I sat up and said, "Hey, Gobber?"<p>

"Mm?" Gobber asked, stopping in his long-winded reminiscence of the last time he'd come face-to-face with a troll.

I flushed guiltily, realizing I hadn't really been listening to his story. "I was wondering if I could borrow your tools again tomorrow, because it's a little late to get started working on it tonight."

"Well, what kind of materials do you need?" Gobber asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Not much," I promised.

"What are you gonna make?" he asked and he seemed actually interested before quickly adding, "Provided you're okay with tellin' me."

I couldn't see the blacksmith of Berk being this tactful, especially about something in his field of expertise, but it wasn't exactly a secret, so I told him. "I used to have a riding vest that I used whenever Toothless and I flew together, onlyâ€|" I hesitated for a long moment and then finally managed, "â€|it gotâ€|taken out of my possession a few years back and I haven't been able to settle down and remake it since. It'll mostly take only leather, soâ€|" I shrugged, leaving it up in the air for him to decide.

\_It got taken out of your possession, right, yeah. Are you too much of a coward to just tell the truth? \_

"Sure, lad," Gobber told me. "Can I see it when you're done?" At my confused look, he added, "What can I say? I'm a Viking who appreciates fine craftsmanship."

"If I had that, I could understand," I muttered, but it was so low he didn't hear me. I opened my vest and pulled out my sketchbook, flipping to one of the last few pages, the one showing an old drawing of the riding vest.

I pulled my charcoal pencil out of the middle and began scribbling down modifications, hardly even noticing that Gobber was staring at me, or more accurately, my book, as I worked.

"That's a good drawing," Gobber commented, nodding at the book.

I glanced at it for a second before shrugging. I didn't see it. "Not really." And I went right back to my scrawling.

## 17. What's Wrong Now?

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 17: What's Wrong Now?

**\*\*Um...yeah...not terribly confident about this chapter, but eh...  
\*shrugs\* it'll pass. \*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>"For the last time, trolls DO NOT exist!"<p>

"But they do!" Gobber insisted, letting his slice of bread drop back onto his wooden plate and slamming his real hand down on the table for emphasis. "'Onest, I saw one with me own eyesâ€"

"Or more likely, you saw a very large dragon," Stoick muttered under his breath.

"You don' believe me about the Boneknapper, either, I don't know why I even talk to you some daysâ€|"

"Here we go againâ€|" Stoick sighed.

I smiled, picking up my piece of bread and biting into it as I listened to Gobber recount the story of how he met this particular dragon.

"Did I ever tell you abou' how I met the dreaded Boneknapper?" Gobber asked, turning to me.

I shook my head. Somehow, throughout all our work in the forge together, he'd never told me this one.

"Wellâ€|" Gobber began, clearly warming up to tell an excellent story. "I was a young lad, about your age, on summer vacation with my family, when I heard the call of nature!"

Stoick's next words were drowned out by an enormous roar that echoed, shaking the whole hut.

"Oh, no," Stoick murmured, pushing his chair back from the table. "Another raid? This soon?"

I stood up, too, and Gobber exchanged a tense look with Stoick.

The chief was already halfway towards the door and, when he reached it, he opened it and peered out, squinting around in the darkness. "I can't see anything out thereâ€|"

Gobber, Toothless and I followed him over there, and as the two others squinted blindly into the darkness, Toothless and I fixed our eyes on the starry sky above us, scanning it for dragons.

A burst of fire came from our left, and all four of our heads swiveled as one to look at the dragon landing before us. He expelled another great burst of flame, and Stoick stepped out, dragging me along with him. "How do you do this again, Hiccup?"

"Relax," I told him, but this command went unheard, because his muscles remained as tense as ever.

I walked over to the Gronckle, who was lazily spreading his wings, preparing to take to the sky again, but he stopped as I approached. His large, innocent-looking brown eyes found mine, and with just a nod, I communicated that he was safe, and that I didn't plan to hurt him.

Toothless probably helped with that, of course " he'd stuck by my side as Stoick dragged me out into the warm summer night, and he moaned softly, locking eyes with the dragon and nodding, too, telling him I was safe, that I could be trusted.

The Gronckle edged tentatively closer to me, and Toothless moaned again, sending the Gronckle a few inches closer. I would've thanked Toothless for his help, but I decided to focus on the dragon in front of me, first.

Other people were beginning to come out of their huts, but I paid them no attention: as far as I was concerned, it was just me and the Gronckle right now.

The Gronckle grunted, pushing himself slightly forward, brown eyes still distrusting.

"I'm not gonna hurt you," I whispered, kneeling down next to him, but this was a bad move; he growled and retreated, thumping his heavily armored tail on the ground to signify his displeasure.

"Ah. Sorry about that." I scooted farther away again, standing up and retreating several feet away, letting him choose what move to make next.

The Gronckle regarded me through very curious eyes, either trying to decide whether or not to trust me, or whether or not to bring me back as food for his queen.

I swallowed, hoping it wasn't the latter. "I'm not out to hurt you, I-I promise," I repeated, and the Gronckle seemed to relax slightly, but this might have been my hopeful imagination.

The Gronckle edged a little closer again, and Toothless gave another one of his moans.

The Gronckle kept coming, seeming more confident with each "word" Toothless spoke in that strange language of his that he shared with the other dragons.

Stoick was yelling at the people to listen to him, but I paid him no attention, either; the Monstrous Nightmare had had to fly off too soon, but maybe this dragon could help instead.

"I want to help you," I said to him, and this was perfectly true.

The Gronckle drew away from me again, growling, fangs bared. I recognized I'd said something either very offensive or potentially threatening, and quickly tried to backtrack. "That'sâ€|that's notâ€"

Toothless moaned again and the dragon relaxed, even more this time, turning on me curiously. His eyes shifted for a second to Toothless

and he roared.

Toothless gave him a nod and I understood that this conversation they were having was important and not to interrupt.

Then the dragon turned his large brown eyes on me and growled in a strangely flat way, almost as if, if he could give human speech, he would've been speaking in a hopeless tone.

"I can help you," I told him on sudden impulse, and he relaxed a little more, edging closer and pressing his nose against my wrist.

I slowly slid my hand down his nose once, twice, three times, and he was lulled into a pleasantly sleepy daze, even snoring softly and blowing smoke rings once or twice.

Taking my eyes off the dragon for the first time in minutes, I saw others following my lead, edging closer to the dragons in front of them, too, half-scared, half-hopeful and expectant.

Astrid was going towards a Nadder, identical to the one I'd led her over to during the last raid, and I wondered if it was possible if it was the same one.

She had dropped her axe, but rested her boot upon it still, as if waiting for the moment when she'd have need of it.

I wanted to go over and tell her that it was pointless to try and earn a dragon's trust when you had a weapon so close by, but I couldn't make my way over to her through the crowd, and besides that, I really wasn't in the mood to start something else between us, especially since Gobber seemed so heartily convinced that I liked her.

I turned my attention to a woman who didn't seem to want to get too close to her attacking Zippleback, and I gently took her hand, guiding it closer to the dragon's first head.

"You shouldn't ever attempt to train a two-headed dragon alone," I explained to her.

She nodded and slowly raised a shaking hand to the dragon's other head and I turned back to the dragon with its slit yellow eyes and flaring nostrils.

"Hey, it's okay, buddy," I told him while the Gronckle I'd been paying attention to just seconds before came up and nudged me. Toothless got on the other side of me and they both began conversing with the Zippleback.

Just as the Zippleback seemed to be seriously considering whatever was being said, the woman flinched back from the hissing dragon while a man ran screaming from an enraged Monstrous Nightmare.

\_Heart of lions, these people.\_

'Shut up,' I mentally chastised myself. 'You'd be scared, too.'

"Oh, hold that thought," I told her, and with that, I raced off, calling over my shoulder to Toothless to stay behind and help the

woman and the Zippleback.

I doubted the woman felt comfortable enough in a Night Fury's presence to stay alone with him, but at that point, I didn't care. I raced after the Monstrous Nightmare, but in my determination, I wasn't fully looking where I was going and as a result, I ran " I mean ran smack dab " into Astrid.

"Ouch!" she yelled after the collision, holding her head.

"Oh, sorry," I said nervously, standing up and walking over to her, extending a hand. "Sometimes, I wish there were two of me."

She reached up and I expected her to take my hand, but she batted it out of the way and pushed herself to her feet using her hands, glaring at me and breathing heavily. "Out of my way!" she snapped and she moved forward at exactly the same moment I did.

We found ourselves in each other's path again and I could feel myself blushing as I mimicked her for a second time, going to the right while she did as well.

In my state of stress and nervousness, I found myself chuckling a little.

"Are you trying to be funny?" she demanded of me, stopping short.

"Of course not," I replied as quickly as I could and I carefully stepped around her, making my way towards the enraged Monstrous Nightmare. "Where'd your Nadder go, anyway?"

"Nowhere," she snapped angrily and she carried on without a backward glance.

"Hmm," I mumbled, turning my attention on the Monstrous Nightmare, who was attempting to singe my hands. "Hey, hey, hey. No. It's okay, it's okay."

He stopped snorting fire and looked at me through curious yellow eyes.

"That's it," I whispered, moving closer just as a squawk of outrage sounded from behind me.

"Odin, what's wrong now?" Gobber demanded, pausing long enough beside me to yell only that, before charging back into battle with a kind of fierce glee.

"What is wrong, now?" I asked, stepping over some discarded weapons to get to the source of the commotion.

I turned to see Astrid with her Nadder in tow and they appeared to be having a disagreement. "Oh, great," I groaned, stepping over to her.

"Guys" I began, and both she and the Nadder turned on me.

"What?!" Astrid demanded angrily, flicking a piece of wayward blonde hair out of her eyes.

"I think you both need to calm down," I informed her, moving closer to the Nadder and extending a hand for hers.

There was a silence as she glanced down at my outstretched palm and then said in a cold voice, "And what do you expect me to do?"

"Take my hand," I replied, as if it were obvious.

She glared at me. "Why?"

"Will you please just do what I ask?" I demanded and she reluctantly took my hand, just barely clinging on, as if she were frightened of contamination if she touched my hand too long or gripped it too tight.

I gently guided her hand over the Nadder's snout and then took my hand off hers, spitting into it and gently streaking it onto the Nadder's wing.

"What are you doing?" she demanded of me curiously, tilting her pretty blonde head.

"Dragon skin is incredibly dry," I informed her. "Moisture calms them down. You can do it too, if you like."

Her eyes scanned over me and then she shook her head, turning back to look into her Nadder's eyes. "No, I don't think so."

I shrugged, glancing around as I gently stroked the Nadder's wing with my hand.

## 18. After the Attack

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 18: After the Attack

\*\*Um, yes, I know, horribly unoriginal title. SHUT UP, OK?! xD  
\*\*

\*\*Okay, so it was brought to my attention that Rascal the Guest has a birthday today. Well, this chapter is for them! \*\*

\*\*P.S: I know it's short. I'm about to go work on the next one.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"You've all done well!" Stoick called out to the villagers as the last few dragons flew away and Toothless came up to me, touching my back gently with his nose.<p>

I smiled down at him, but Stoick quickly recaptured my attention. "We

managed to calm the dragons long enough for them to fail to steal food, and there is no reason we can't do this next time as well!"

"Every time these blasted things leave, I hope there won't be a next time," muttered an old man next to me, with a long dirty beard and several missing teeth.

As Stoick bustled away from the other villagers, he came up to me and clapped me on the back. "You did brilliantly, Hiccup. Well done." He stared down at me with the same intensity that had been in his eyes last night, when he'd told me to look after myself.

"Umâ€¦yeahâ€¦sure," I mumbled as a few people came up to me.

"Thank you for helping me," the woman with the Zippleback said, smiling gratefully. "I really didn't have a clue what I was doing."

"Y-you're welcome, I guess," I stuttered as she gave my hand a firm shake.

"The name's Helga, by the way," she said, a bit brisker. "And youâ€¦you're Hiccup, aren't you?"

I nodded and Toothless shot her a gummy smile.

"Thank you for helping with that Monstrous Nightmare, boy," another man added, stepping up next to me as well.

"Erâ€¦umâ€¦you're welcome," I told him.

As the small knot of people dispersed, I spotted Gobber and Astrid standing there, conversing quietly.

Astrid didn't look that pleased to see me, but Gobber positively beamed. "Hiccup!" he boomed loudly. "I tried what you showed us on Toothless with another dragon and it worked!"

"Umâ€¦well, that's good," I started, but Gobber was already bustling away as well.

There was an awkward silence between Astrid and me for several long minutes, and so I nervously pulled at a thread on the end of my sleeve, waiting for her to speak, but I just wasn't going to be the first one to start something this time. She wanted to say something to me, she could; I just wasn't going to.

"Thanks," she finally said and she raised her head, actually smiling at me. "For your help with the Nadder and all."

I shrugged. "All in a day's work, I suppose."

She was quite pretty when she smiled, I noted and even prettier when she laughed. "Oh, so I guess the people back on your old island miss you loads?"

My stomach clenched. \_Lie.\_



"Oh, yeah," I shrugged. "Everybody misses the runt. Nah, I think they were glad to see me go, but, then, I think I was glad to leave."

"Why?" she asked, but I was saved from answering by Gobber, who came up behind me again and gave me a friendly biff on the shoulder.

"Reckon everyone's gonna love you now," he told me, smiling proudly down at me. "You're the hero of the hour, you know."

I laughed lightly, shaking my head. "Yeah. That'll be the day."

## 19. Popularity

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 19: Popularity

\*\*Hey! Um, here's my newest chapter AND YES, I JUST PULLED THE TITLE OUT OF MY BUTT, ALRIGHT?! D: Anyway, now that I've gotten that out of my system... xD I already have chapter 21 planned out, but it might require some rushing of chapter 20...it might be chapter 22 or 3 instead :P \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The next day passed in a blur of working and talking and trying not to wince whenever somebody punched me on the shoulder.<p>

I tried to work on the riding vest that day, I really did, but everybody who came into the forge struck up a loud conversation with Gobber about where they might find me, and, though I tried to hide in the backroom every time somebody came in, Gobber made me come out to at least greet them. He said it was rude to hide in the backroom. I wanted to tell him he'd know all about rude, but I bit my tongue.

And they all had the strength of fifty of me, and whenever they punched me on the shoulder; I had to focus on not looking pained. At one point, I thought I heard a bone in my arm snap, but I just pasted a smile on my face and nodded along to whatever they were saying.

About halfway through, when Gobber called me again, I just stayed put. I was tired of feeling like a show dog or something, so I just stayed right where I was and focused on the piece of leather in front of me that I was attempting to turn into an acceptable riding vest.

Gobber didn't come back in again or call me again and I actually got some real work on the vest done, at least until I looked up and saw

that the sun was setting.

Toothless had sat by my chair all day, and I felt guilty for making him stay with me when he was most likely bored out of his mind.

He didn't have to stay with me; that was his own little thing. We'd spent so much time separated on Outcast Island that whenever we were apart for too long, we kind ofâ€|panicked.

So he stayed with me all day and I felt guilty enough to shove the vest away and swing my legs over the side of the chair. "Hey, buddy," I whispered and his ears perked up. He looked up at me hopefully, maybe thinking I had food for him â€" it was almost dinnertime, after all.

"Do you want to go flying?" I said quietly and he nodded enthusiastically, jumping up and circling my chair a few times to let off some steam.

The riding vest was only half-finished, so I couldn't use it yet, but just in case Gobber came in the backroom to check on me, I tore a page out of my journal and scribbled, '\_out flying with Toothless. Be back later', \_and left it on my desk, going out the back way with Toothless. I liked the back way better â€" less people.

I climbed on Toothless' back and we took off in the sky.

\* \* \*

><p>When Toothless and I had landed again, I had the feeling that I was being watched. I glanced around and nobody was there. I breathed out a little sigh of relief. I had the feeling of being watched all the time now, but if I didn't look to make sure there was nobody there, it got worse and worse and the feeling of fear would increase until I finally did look.<p>

I went back into the forge the back way and as I sat back down to get some more work done on the vest, I heard a voice behind me. "Back again, Hiccup."

I jumped and stood up so fast that my chair flew away from me and hit the wall behind, sending it crashing to the floor. Toothless jumped into a defensive position, building up a fireball in his throat and my heart raced as I reached for my knives before remembering Alvin had taken them and I couldn't defend myselfâ€|

"Whoa!" Gobber held up his hands. "Don't shoot! I'm a peaceful man!"

"Don't DO that!" I cried, one hand clasped around my wrist, feeling my pulse. It was racing like I'd just run a mile. I forced myself to calm down and I turned to Toothless, who was already swallowing the ball of fire, looking mildly disappointed. I wouldn't have said that dragons were bloodthirsty creatures upon first befriending Toothless, but after a few years with him, I realized he did, in fact, pick fights an awful lot, human or dragon â€" I doubted it really mattered to him.

"Don't DO that!" I repeated angrily, crossing the room and setting the chair back up on its feet.

"Sorry," Gobber muttered guiltily, but I caught the hint of a grin on his face.

"Uh-huh," I mumbled, not believing his apology for a second.

"I swear. You think I'd inflict that dragon's rage on myself on \_purpose\_?"

I glanced at Toothless as I pushed the chair closer to the desk.  
"Point proven, I guess."

"Exactly," Gobber said. "Anyway, I only came to tell ya that it's gettin' late and I'm about to close down the forge, but you can keep workin' if you want."

"I'll do that, then," I nodded, and I sat back down in my chair, but I could still sense him behind me, and I couldn't deal with people behind me, so I glanced back around at him. "Did you need something?"

"Oh, no," Gobber said quickly. "Although that was a pretty impressive flight today."

My hands slipped on the clasp of the leather vest and it fell to the floor. I picked it up and glanced at him, trying to make sense of his sheepish grin. "Wh-what?"

\_Oh, nice. I suppose if you fail at being a Viking, you can always go for 'Number One idiot of the Archipelago'.\_

"I saw you flying," Gobber said, and he pointed to the window. "But I didn't stop for long, I only saw you for about ten minutes."

"Oh, yeah, well," I mumbled, turning back to my worktable, hoping to hide my burning face. I didn't like that he'd seen us.

"Anyway, if you need me, I'll be at Stoick's," Gobber added, heading for the door.

"Alright," I nodded.

"You gonna come?" Gobber asked gently.

"Maybe," I mumbled.

"C'mon."

I let the vest fall back on the table. "You guys keep pulling me away from it and I'll never get it finished."

"C'mon," Gobber repeated, ignoring me. "You'll have plenty of time to finish it tomorrow."

"This is not two days' work, Gobber," I replied as he muscled his way out of the backroom and through the front door. Toothless and I just kind of followed. "This is gonna take at least two weeks. A month if people keep coming to the forge like they did today and you keep prancing me around like a show dog."

Gobber grinned guiltily. "Sorry, laddie."

Although I was complaining nonstop about it, every time I blinked I had a purple afterimage of the forge's lights and the riding vest.

Maybe a break would do us both " me and Toothless " some good.

## 20. Flashes

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 20: Flashes

\*\*NO. OKAY. NO. I DO NOT KNOW WHY I CHOSE THAT TITLE, EITHER. :P anyway, I'm also working on my Halloween story 'I Didn't Mean to Hurt You, Too' so if you're in the mood for something Halloween-y, you guys should read it! :D please? \*\*

\*\*Anyway, um, yeah. It's gonna be chapter 23 or 24, but I had plans for chapter 24...I'm sorry, I have random little bursts of inspiration where basically I know everything that's going to happen five chapters from now, but no idea of what's going to transpire in the very next one xD well, okay, actually, I have a vague idea, but it wouldn't work for anything earlier than 23 or 24, so...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The next few days passed in blurs and only certain flashes stuck out to me, flashes that had been made memorable for some reason or another.<p>

I had flashes of working on the vest, a blur of sewing and pressing and cutting and reworking.

I remembered Gobber telling me stories on quiet days in the forge, his voice echoing, shattering the early morning peace.

I remembered little clips of the villagers patting me on the back, thanking me, telling me what a great job I'd done in the dragon attack last week.

It felt strange to be liked and congratulated, and even stranger to realize that there were some people on this island who had spoken to me before and were interested in speaking to me again.

I guess being the village screw-up has that effect on people.

The chief seemed warmer, somehow, too, as if the dragon attack had made him like me a little better as well.

And Gobber remained the same as he always was, just kind of there, as

insane and possibly unstable as he was.

I remember one night, after having had dinner at Stoick's house, before we all parted ways to go to bed, we had sat down in the living room and Stoick and Gobber began telling me story after story of bloody battles.

"and that dragon crept up behind me" Gobber continued, leaning toward me and forming claws with his hands. "with menace in those yellow eyes"

I leaned forward a little, too, but Toothless didn't seem interested. Maybe he himself had seen too much warfare to be terribly interested in another story about it.

"And he opened his mouth his jaws blood red from the life of other victims I tried to run, but that dragon was faster he clamped his jaws over my knee and bit down with apparent relish"

I swallowed, but interest still bound me to listen.

"He bit through flesh and blood seeped out from my leg"

I couldn't tell if I was interested in the story any longer or not, but I listened anyway, because Gobber seemed so into the story that I didn't want to interrupt and a kind of fascination had taken hold of me anyway.

"and I thought it was the end bones snapping blood dripping staining his fangs a bright red"

I winced and bit down, hard, on my tongue, drawing a little blood.

"and then he SNAPPED MY LEG CLEAN OFF!"

He gestured to his prosthetic leg, and then continued, "Oh, but I got my revenge, alright! I took my mace and bludgeoned him to death hitting him over the noggin again and again there was blood, then, I'll tell ya" and he gave a bloodthirsty little laugh.

"Gobber," Stoick interrupted, pointing at me.

"What?" Gobber demanded, irritated, and then he glanced over at me. "Oh." His smile faded.

"You're scaring him," Stoick said in an audible whisper.

"I'm not scared!" I said hotly and it was actually true: maybe a little uninterested in the story now, but definitely not scared.

"All the same, maybe we should get to bed," Gobber said in a soothing voice. "We're gonna have a big day tomorrow"

"Hmph," I muttered grumpily, still stuck on the whole 'you're-scaring-him' thing and not happy about it.

"C'mon," Gobber went on, ignoring me. "I'll stop telling stories about how I lost my limbs."

I planned on walking alone to the forge, but Gobber walked with me, reminding me that I needed him to open the door for me with his key. "Alright, Hiccup," he whispered, "just scooch on in thereâ€|'nightâ€|"

"'Night, Gobber," I responded, and he shut the door.

Toothless curled up on the floor and I rested my head on his back, reminding myself I should probably make a saddle, tooâ€|but I didn't want to intrude on their hospitality any more than I already hadâ€|

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>NO!" <em>

"\_HICCUP?"\_

"\_Hiccup the dragon trainer?"\_

"\_But he can't be!"\_

"\_It's not possible!"\_

\_But soon, their cries of surprise turned into something a little different.\_

"\_We should've known!"\_

"\_He comes prancing in here with these fancy ideasâ€|"

"\_Maybe hoping to get back in our good graces?"\_

"\_He lied to us! To all of us!"\_

"\_I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD'VE KICKED HIM OFF, AND NO MORE SAID!"

\_

\_There was nothing but hurt in Gobber's eyes. "Hiccupâ€|how could you?"\_

"\_An Outcast!" Astrid said, her face very white. "How?!"\_

"\_Hiccup, how could you?!"\_

\_But I had an answer for no one. I turned and I ran.\_

I woke up, panting, gasping for breath, sucking the air, but it offered me little relief. It was still dark outside and the only light that came was the meager light from the stars. It was all okay; everybody was safe and nobody knew about me.

My hands clenched into fists and I took a few more ragged, slow breaths before laying back down on Toothless and trying to coax myself back to sleep.

## 21. If I Could

### To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 21: If I Could

\*\*I actually had this title idea in mind :D also, I'm gonna try to finish this before, but just in case I don't, a warning: if I don't finish this before November, I will be taking a month-long break for Nano Wrmo. I do it every year and it's become a sort of tradition with me. It's not November or Thanksgiving or Christmas without it, you know what I mean? \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>When I woke up the next morning, it was to the sound of Gobber yelling for me.<p>

"Hiccup!" he called. "Hiccup!"

I opened my eyes, reluctantly about to call back, but before I could even get a word in edgewise, Toothless shifted suddenly beneath me and then ran out from underneath my head, roaring and growling wildly.

"Hiccup! AAH!" I heard uneven footsteps running as fast as they could and Toothless' pattering feet, along with a lot of excited roaring and a not-so-manly Viking yell or two thrown in there.

This was quickly joined by a couple ominous thumps and as I kicked off the blanket, I thought groggily to myself, \_they could be an orchestra. "And this track, kids, is called, 'How the Vikings died off!' \_

The thought brought a smile to my face as I ripped apart the curtains that separated the room I'd been sleeping in from the rest of the forge.

When I looked out, I saw upturned tables and Gobber running around the forge, being chased by Toothless.

I shook my head, smiling to myself. "Toothless!" I called over his excited roars. "Stop it!"

Gobber quickly sheltered beneath a worktable. "You heard the lad!" he called, in what would've been a fearless tone had his voice not trembled slightly halfway through.

Toothless leaned forward and opened his mouth, preparing to take Gobber's prosthetic leg in his teeth.

"Toothless!" I repeated and Toothless looked around at me, his eyes going wide and shiny, the way they always did when he wanted something from me.

He knew I would bend over backward to give him whatever he wanted when he used those Bambi eyes, so I focused instead on the cowering Gobber as I said, "Below the belt, bud. Let him go."

This was what I meant about him being bloodthirsty. He liked the thrill of a chase and he'd proceeded to scare Gobber, even after knowing the man wasn't a threat.

Toothless reluctantly spat out Gobber's prosthetic, scaly shoulders hunched as he came back over to stand by my side.

Gobber fixed his prosthetic back on the way it had been, panting slightly. "Thanks, Hiccup. I had it covered, but thanks anyway."

"Yeah, apparently not," I replied. "Or was that sheltering beneath a worktable just a ploy?"

"Go to hell," Gobber mumbled, stumping over to the upended worktable and successfully turning it back over. He then chucked all the fallen weapons and tools back onto it, and turned to me.  
"Well."

"Interesting start to a day," I commented, turning away under the pretense of grabbing my vest so he wouldn't see the fact that a smile threatened at the corners of my lips.

I was careful not to glance at Toothless, either, for fear I would start laughing.

"Very," sniffed Gobber.

I wiped at my eyes and walked back over to the worktable, glancing over at his weapons pile. "Do you want some help, Gobber?"

"Sure, lad," Gobber responded happily.

\* \* \*

><p>"You're the stupid one."<p>

"No, you!"

"No, you!"

"No, you!"

"Can we please stop fighting?"

"NO!" shouted both twins, for once united on something.

I shook my head, pulling my plate closer to me. "Of course they can't."

The husky blonde boy had introduced himself to me as 'Fishlegs'; I was eating lunch with him, Astrid, Snotlout and the twins.

"I wonder if it would kill them," Astrid muttered and we shared a smile at the question.



"Yeah, maybe," I told her.

"I wouldn't mind it if it killed Ruffnut," Tuffnut " or Ruffnut " or whichever one it was" the boy" said. "But I would mind if it killed me."

"I'm too pretty to die," the girl twin sighed tragically.

"That's right, my queen," Snotlout cooed.

"I thought you were doomed to flirt with Astrid forever?"

"I've moved on," Snotlout informed me loftily, but his dark eyes rested on me for a long second before he said that and I briefly wondered if he thought of me as competition before my cheeks heated at the idea.

"Hallelujah," Astrid muttered and I smiled, shaking off the previous thoughts.

\* \* \*

><p>"I've made a decision," Gobber announced, watching me fetch him his hammer prosthetic. "I'm going to keep you around and instead of Hiccup, I'll call you 'Legs'. And whenever I need something, I'll just say, 'Legs!' and you'll come running." He grinned, pleased with himself. "What do you think?"<p>

"I think not," I replied, handing him his hammer prosthetic. "But for as long as I'm here, maybe I ought to. You probably do have an ordeal just getting up and walking around every day, huh?" I gestured awkwardly to his leg.

\_Wow. Way to be insensitive, Haddock.\_

Gobber smiled, to my relief. "I adjusted. I always do."

"Still," I muttered, watching as he screwed his hammer back on the base. "Shouldn't I do what I can?"

"No," Gobber replied, as if I was being stupid. "I'm a Viking. Everything is hard."

I wasn't sure I was completely happy with his explanation " a lot of explanations on Berk seemed to have the core excuse of, 'I'm a Viking'.

I picked up a block of metal, tossing it into the furnace and shrugged off my vest, hanging it on the nearby hook. The forge always got hot this time of day, even though it was now officially autumn.

Gobber had already broken the news to me that by the time winter rolled around, you didn't take off an item of clothing for almost anything in that month, especially not on Berk.

I noticed Gobber fiddling with his key to the forge and I glanced around at it curiously before shrugging it off and turning back to the furnace, rolling up my sleeves before doing anything else.

\* \* \*

><p>I darted into the backroom, drawing the curtain closed behind me and glancing at Toothless. "Stop looking at me like that. I'll tell them the truth, okay? Right now, Gobber's working. It wouldn't be the best time to burst in there and say, 'Hey, I'm an Outcast!'"<p>

Horrified with myself for speaking the words so loudly, I bit my lip and dropped my voice, dropping to my knees beside Toothless, scratching him comfortingly behind the ears. "'Sides, it's not like I plan to stay here."

Toothless just stared at me, like a sarcastic response was teetering on the tip of his tongue.

"It's not," I repeated. "Althoughâ€|" I glanced out the window at the setting sun. "It'd be niceâ€|if, you know, I could."

## 22. Always Right

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 22: Always Right

\*\*I was originally going to call this chapter 'Trust' or maybe 'Keys' but I like the sound of 'Always Right' better, because I feel ending it on a slightly angry note is more...I don't know. Powerful, I guess. It sounds better in my head. Anyway, for those of you who didn't know about what I was talking about last AN, Nano Wrimo is where you write a fifty-thousand-word novel in thirty days. It's pretty grueling, but last year I finished a week early and it gave me the courage to do it again this year. (also, all my writer buddies are doing it and they basically told me if I didn't do it, I would be forever branded a coward, so now I have to xD) However, I don't have as much confidence in this story idea. It started out as an idea for a How to Train Your Dragon fanfiction, but unfortunately, I can't just have the boy walking in here with the name 'Hiccup', but his character is very loosely based off Hiccup, so they're a bit alike. I mean, it did start out as a fanfiction idea :P and then it became my Nano novel :D anyway...BUT, the main girl was originally more like Astrid, but I gave her her own character and stuff and now they're both a lot different :D but every character in there except the OCs is so loosely based off somebody from- OH HOLY CRAP CHECK OUT THIS AN! SHUTTING UP NOW! \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>That night, as Gobber and I walked home from Stoick's house again, Gobber said, as if only just remembering something, "Oh, yeah. I have somethin' for ya at the forge."<p>

I tilted my head curiously, wondering what he meant, but I didn't ask questions. I just continued on to the forge in silence and when we got there, Gobber tossed me a tiny metal key. "There. It's a copy o' mine. Now ya can come and go from this place as ye please."

I stared down at the key for a second, then slid it into my pocket. "Alright. Thanks." It sounded stupid, even in my head, but I was weirdly happy that he'd given me the key. It was as if he was telling me that he trusted me.

It was completely stupid, of course.

A stupid key meant nothing in terms of trust â€" nothing at all. But this forge was Gobber's pride and joy and it felt nice that he trusted me with a key to it.

\_Yeah. About the first time anybody's ever trusted you with anything, huh?\_

Guilt flared inside me, boiling hot, as I began thinking of these past few weeks and how nice and welcoming Gobber had been to me and now he trusted me with a key to the forge, and I'd been lying to him all this time.

I thought of the look on Toothless' face earlier that day, silently urging me to tell someone about my real origin.

A sudden feeling of shame mixed with the guilt and I pulled the key out of my pocket again, half-wishing I'd never seen it and the other half of me still stuck on that one word: \_trust.\_

\_If you can't trust them, then why the hell should they trust you?\_

I swallowed. "Um. Yeah. Thanks, Gobber."

Gobber was watching me with a concerned expression. "Ya alright, lad?"

"Yeah," I managed. "Yeah, I'm okay."

"Alright," he patted me affectionately on the shoulder, walking past me to get to the door. "'Night, Hiccup. See you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow, Gobber," I whispered, and as he shut the door, I drew my arms closer around me, still fingering the key.

It sounded so stupid, but looking at that key, I felt that I was home. I felt Toothless' gaze on me. He sensed my emotions, he sensed guilt and shame, but he also sensed a deep-seated happiness and it was easy to see why this was causing him confusion.

But I didn't want to dwell on Outcast Island or my dad right now. I didn't want to dwell on what had been. So I just let my head fall against his back and I stared up at the ceiling, watching the moon and the stars leave little bars of light on the walls.

I glanced at the key one last time before falling asleep.

When I woke up that morning, I realized I was shivering and had been

while I slept. I sat up and gently blew a warm breath on my freezing hands, but it didn't help much.

\_This must be what winter on Berk feels like, \_I thought and I glanced out the window, but there was no snow.

I felt like there should have been icicles lining the tree branches and snow covering the roof of the forge, but no â€" only a thick carpet of leaves gave any hint as to what season might be approaching.

The memories of last night came flooding back, along with a lot of guilt. I knew I owed it to Gobber, the man who'd been nothing but welcoming to me.

But I wasn't sure if I had the courage to tell him.

\_Oh, look at you. Are you seriously going SOFT? Do you actually CARE what these people think of you?\_

Everything in me flinched away from the honest response. The voice saw he had the advantage and pressed it.

\_You actually do? You're pathetic, Haddock. Haven't you learned by now not to trust?\_

'I don't trust them,' I thought defensively. 'I justâ€¦I like the place, that's all.'

\_You gonna keep lying to yourself like that or are you ready to be honest?\_

I sighed, leaning back on my hands. I hated that voice, but mostly, I hated how he was always right.

I drew the key out of my pocket, examining it. I couldn't stay on Berk, I couldn't keep the key, I couldn't do this. I had to leave. Soon.

I couldn't do this.

I suddenly heard an off-key voice singing loudly. "I'VE GOT MY AXE AND I'VE GOT MY MACE AND I LOVE MY WIFE WITH THEâ€"

"SHUT IT!" I yelled, stepping out of the backroom to see Gobber, looking completely unabashed.

"Here comes the wet blanket of the singing world," he teased.

I crossed my arms. "I am not the wet blanket. I just don't likeâ€"

"To hear me killing your ears, I know, I know." Gobber was being so nice about it that I began to get embarrassed.

"No," I protested, my face red. "No, I didn't meanâ€"

"It's alright, Hiccup," Gobber laughed, reaching over to pat my shoulder. "I'm a Viking and a Viking can admit when he's tone-deaf."

"You're not," I tried consolingly, but he just gave me a look.

After a few minutes of silence, however, he began humming and then mumbling the lyrics, as if he thought I was so focused in work that I couldn't hear him.

\_Well? \_

Well, what? I wondered, gently, mentally prodding that voice, struggling to hear what it wanted me to.

\_I'm still waiting.\_

I knew what it was waiting for, but I wasn't ever going to give it confirmation. I wasn't ever going to admit how much I liked it here and how much I liked Gobber and Stoick and Astrid and all the others.

I hated how that voice was always right.

## 23. So Much

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 23: So Much

**\*\*Yes, witches! Say hello to the filler, alright?! Anyway, it was brought to my attention - TWICE, in fact, I just forgot to settle it the first time - that the voice in Hiccup's head has been referring to him by the name, 'Haddock'. However, he isn't Hiccup Haddock in this AU. \*\***

**\*\*I would like to thank the person who brought that to my attention! It's a force of habit, I suppose xD and also, despite the opposite becoming canon in book six, it's always sort of been my head canon that Hiccup Horrendous Haddock wasn't Hiccup's name. 'Hiccup' was, but the rest was his title as a Viking. I think that sons of chiefs and stuff are given titles either when they're first born or around their preteen years, but this was disproved in Book Six, 'A Hero's Guide to Deadly Dragons', when Stoick calls Hiccup that and mentions that this name has been passed down through the centuries. Well, I guess it's not his title, but my head canon and pure force of habit have made me make that voice call him that. I wish to apologize for any irritation or confusion this may have caused anyone, and I will try to remember to make it call him 'Treacherous' or something in the future, alright?\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>"So, you said you come from the Peaceable tribe, Hiccup?" Stoick asked me cheerfully later that night.<p>

"Uhâ€| " I half-glanced at the tabletop. "Yeah."

\_That's a lie. That's a lie. That's a lie.\_

Gobber changed the subject quickly. "So that was some temperature in the forge today, huh?" he chuckled.

"I thought for sure winter had come," I replied, seizing gratefully upon the subject. Anything to shut out the voice.

"No, not yet, lad," Gobber said, shaking his head. "But it will. Soon. It always starts like this."

He seemed a little sad, and he sighed as he looked beyond me, out the window. "Which means you'll have to get a move on."

"What?" I asked, glancing up.

"You don't ever want to leave Berk in winter," Gobber said. "You're pretty much guaranteed frostbite."

He and Stoick shared a look and they both nodded in agreement.

"'Course," Gobber added, "you're pretty much guaranteed frostbite anywhere on this island during winter."

I smiled. "I'll be sure to get the vest finished before the first snowfall."

"If the first snowfall comes before the vest gets finished, you'll stay here, of course?" It was more a statement than a question at first, but Stoick added an inquiring note at the end.

"Ohâ€|uhâ€|umâ€|I guess. Unless I want to freeze to death, and that's definitely not on my to-do list."

Stoick's face retained the same expressionless look for about a millisecond and then, suddenly, he smiled.

Gobber chuckled lightly, but I couldn't hope for the same reaction from Stoick: this sad, stern chief of Berk laughing seemed indecent somehow.

Stoick reached out a hand towards me and my fork fell out of my hand, landing on my plate with a loud clatter. I recoiled from his hand, not going so far as to push my chair back, lest that anger him, but I flinched back and then I dropped my head and became still and tense, waiting for it.

Nothing came.

There was no painful blow, no strike on the face.

The last time anybody had reached for me like that, it had been with the intent to strike me. So I waited for Stoick to do it, too, but it didn't come.

I chanced a tentative glance up at Stoick.

"Hiccup?" Stoick's voice was surprisingly gentle. "Is there anything wrong?"

I shook my head, eyes back down on my plate. I hadn't been able to meet his eyes.

\_He'd be crazy not to hit you.\_

I bit down, hard, on my lip, shaking my head even harder, as if I did, it would convince him, or maybe Gobber, or whoever was listening to this very strange conversation right now, one that would not have been occurring with normal people.

"You flinched," he commented quietly.

I shook my head again, silently denying it.

The scraping of Gobber's chair suddenly cut loudly through the thick, heavy silence and Stoick and I both glanced up.

"Eh," Gobber waved his hand. "Carry on. I'll just, ehâ€¦examine your lovelyâ€¦carving collection in the living room, Stoickâ€¦" and he scooted on out of there.

I couldn't tell if he'd done that to give us some privacy or because the situation was making him uncomfortable, but either way, I was enormously grateful that he'd left. Now, if only I could get Stoick to drop it, it'd be okay.

If I couldn't, he'd know I was lying about the Peaceable tribe.

"Hiccupâ€¦" Stoick reached out a hand for me again and then seemed to think better of it, because he dropped it halfway through, letting his hand fall on the table instead.

I stared determinedly at the tabletop. I wasn't letting him win this one.

"You acted like you thought I was going to hit you," he whispered, as if it was some great, huge secret when it really wasn't.

I peeked up at him, then instantly regretted it. His gray eyes were gentle and warm, but also firm and determined. He wasn't letting me out of this. I squirmed slightly in my seat. He wasn't letting me out of this. "Uhâ€¦wellâ€¦it's nothing, sir. I mean, we are Vikings after all, right?" I would've attempted a laugh had I not been fighting the desire to cry or vomit.

My eyes fell back on the table. I couldn't keep looking at him. Everything about him subtly urged me to let go of the lies and for once tell the truth about myself. And I honestly wanted to. I did. I wanted to tell him everything.

Butâ€¦

I knew what would happen. And I wasn't prepared to take those risks.

"Yes," Stoick replied slowly, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "But the Vikings from the Peaceable tribe don't practice violence, do they? That's what earned them their name, Peaceables, isn't it?"

I lowered my eyes. "Yes, sir."

"Thenâ€¦" Stoick began to press, but I closed my eyes and forced out more words, another lie.

"The Peaceable tribe was all about peace," I responded. "But there were some people in there who weren't so peaceful. I got into fights with them sometimes."

"Sometimes?" Stoick challenged. "You must be very used to being hit."

I flushed. "It wasn't always people my age, sir. A few times it wasâ€¦" I swallowed. "â€¦adults, sir."

I couldn't look at him. Everything I was telling him was trueâ€¦but different.

Stoick's brow cleared, but I caught a hint of anger in his eyes. "Adults?"

"What's wrong with that?" I asked. I thought about standing up to show him I was ready for this conversation to be over, but I didn't want to anger him with my impertinence.

There was a silence, a silence so long and loud and thick that I guessed Stoick must've forgotten me, and forgotten I was there, but when he next spoke, he looked directly at me and whispered sadly, "So much."

## 24. Fun

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 24: Fun

\*\*Aw :) Hiccup is happy :) BUT IT IS GOING TO BE CRUSHED! :)  
MWHAAAAHAHAHAHAHA! \*clears throat\* I mean, aww, look, Hiccup is happy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Gobber was back at the kitchen table with us, apparently having exhausted his interest in Stoick's carvings.<p>

"Right," he finally said. "We'd better get going, Stoick." And he stood from the table and began making his way towards the door.

I reached out to take my plate off the table, but Stoick took it from



me before I could, disappearing into the kitchen, so I just stood from the table and waited for him to come back.

When he did, he approached me and reached out a hand, like maybe thinking he was going to rest it on my shoulder, and then he stopped.

I nodded at him, and then, as I turned to go, his quiet voice stopped me. "Wait. Hiccup."

I turned back to him and he did put his hand on my shoulder now, moving down to my back, where he rubbed his hand in soothing little circles. "Winter's on the way, you know."

I nodded. "Yes. I know. I'll try to be out of your hair by then, sir."

He looked surprised, as if he couldn't imagine why I was thinking this. "That's not what I meant. I meantâ€¦the forgeâ€¦it gets awfully cold in the winterâ€¦"

I nodded again. I couldn't argue that. It was only late autumn and I was already waking up shivering every morning.

"What I mean isâ€¦if you likeâ€¦I have a spare bedroom," Stoick finally managed. "It'll be small, but it's much warmer than the forge, and I think you'll like it."

I just stared at him. That was about the last thing I'd expected from this stern chief, but his eyes glowed with warmth. His hand still rested on my back and if it had been somebody else, I probably would've shrugged it off and given them a cold look, but it felt nice and I let him keep it there.

"Oh!" I said, when I could speak again, because that single exclamation of surprise was about the only thing I could even think right then. "Umâ€¦that'sâ€¦that's very kind of you, sir. Butâ€¦but I'm okay, sir. The forge isn't so bad."

"Are you sure?" Stoick pressed.

"Yes, sir." I nodded firmly. "But I appreciate your offer very much."

"Alright," Stoick said, and then he moved his hand off my back.

I walked to the door to see Gobber waiting not so patiently for me there and as we walked to the forge, Gobber sprung the question on me. "So! What did Stoick want to talk to you about?"

"Ohâ€¦uhâ€¦he was just offering me a warmer place to sleep than the forge." I shrugged.

Gobber fixed me with a look, a very long, searching look and it made me uncomfortable, like he was seeing everything I was trying to hide. I didn't like feeling like that. "And?"

"And what?" I asked.

"What did you say?" he seemed uncharacteristically serious.

"Well, I said no," I replied, as if it should be obvious. "I mean, the forge isn't that bad, it's not even that cold. Why?"

"Ladâ€¦" Gobber sighed. "Just be careful, alright?"

"Umâ€¦okay," I responded.

\* \* \*

><p>I woke up the next morning with a fresh determination to work on the vest, but as I sat up and breathed on my hands to hopefully warm them up again, I realized I could see my breath.<p>

Going over to the window for a better look, I realized snow was falling lightly over the scene, every house with lit windows. I sighed as I gazed out at it.

I shivered a little as I leaned farther out, gazing at the tiny snowflakes falling thick and fast until one landed on my nose. I wrinkled my nose up, an automatic reaction to the cold.

Toothless stretched and sat up himself, moaning sleepily as he too peered out the window.

"The chief said it was too cold to leave after first snowfall," I muttered as I glanced out the window. "We might end up staying til spring, Toothless. What do you think?" I looked down at him, waiting for his response, but it didn't come.

The voice in my head, which was far less welcome, did instead.

\_I think you're getting too attached.\_

I scowled, going over to the back door of the forge. "So I like the island."

\_It's not about the island, you idiot. \_

I ripped open the door and stepped out onto the snow-dusted steps. I shivered a little, watching the toes of my boots collect snow and as I stepped out into the street, I heard talk and laughter coming from the front of the forge.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a fierce blow to the head, and I fell forward into the snow.

There was no blood and it didn't feel like there was any internal damage, I thought as my fingers raked the injury and I winced as I hit a tender spot, but there was a lump that was probably going to bruise over the next few days.

I looked up for any sign of my attacker, but there was nothing but a hysterical Gobber, ten feet away. He couldn't possibly have covered the distance so fast, but he was the only one in sightâ€¦

"\_What was that for?!\_" \_I demanded angrily, standing up and practically yelling the words to make myself heard.

Gobber closed the gap between us quickly, his smile slipping. "Oh.

Sorry, lad. Guess I didn't consider what would 'appen if it turned out you didn' like snowball fights." He grinned guiltily, but my anger was gone, replaced by curiosity.

"A snowball fight?" I asked, tilting my head to one side. "What's that?"

Gobber stared at me for a second. "You're kidding, right?"

"No," I shook my head, beginning to feel like an idiot.

"You've never 'ad a snowball fight before?" he demanded, and so I shook my head again.

"Will you just explain what it was?"

"Alright," Gobber said cautiously, and he pulled up a pile of white mush from the ground and began to pack it into a snowball. "See this? This is a snowball."

"Okay." I nodded. So far, I was following.

"Well, there are no real rules, except that you throw these at each other and try to hit each other. It can be as little as two people to as many as you like." He grinned. "What do you think?"

"So basically, we throw snow at each other?" I asked, dumbfounded as to what made this "fun".

"'Ey!" Gobber looked peeved. "Snowballs, lad! Snow\_balls\_! Don' forget that part!"

"What's the significant of it being spherical?" I asked.

"You can hit harder that way," Gobber replied. "Go on, try it."

"Try what?"

"Make one!"

"Gobber, no!" I protested.

"Why not?"

"Becauseâ€|thisâ€|this is childish!" I protested.

Gobber crossed his arms. "C'mon, Hiccup. Ya haven' lived until you've 'ad a snowball fight."

I didn't really see a way out of this, so I just kind of scraped a bit of snow off the ground and tried to form it into a sphere. It was hard, because I'd never picked up snow before and so the cold stung my hands badly, but I managed to do it. It looked pathetic, but I managed to do it.

"Not bad," Gobber praised, looking at it. "Now throw it."

"At who?"

"\_Anyone.\_"

"Erâ€|okayâ€|" I tentatively tossed it at Gobber, throwing lightly so I wouldn't hit him as hard as he'd hit me.

It hit him on the helmet, coating the metal in white powder.

He sighed, as if thinking he had to do everything. "I'll go back over there, to where I was standing, and you can throw one at me there, okay?"

"Umâ€|okay, but I have bad aim," I said. As Gobber walked away, I glanced around to make sure nobody was watching this show of immaturity, and when I was sure they weren't, I picked up another bit of snow from the ground and formed it into a ball, staring at it. It looked slightly better than my last one, but, I reflected, that really wasn't saying much.

Gobber had just barely turned when I threw it at him, and it got him in the face this time. He grunted in displeasure, reaching up to wipe it away, and then he scraped the ground with his fingers, looking for some snow himself.

I wasn't sure what to do when one was coming at you, so I just kind of stood there as it soared right past my ear. I watched it land ten feet behind me, and then I turned back to Gobber.

He made another annoyed grunt and I had formed another snowball and lobbed it at him before he'd managed to even bend down.

It hit him on the helmet, successfully knocking it off.

"Hey!" he cried indignantly. "You don' touch a man's helmet!"

"Just did!" I called back and so he hurled another one at me, and this time, I ducked, before popping back up and yelling, "YOUR AIM STINKS!"

"SHUT IT!" Gobber yelled back, before my snowball nailed him in the kisser. He just kind of stood there for a second, like he wasn't sure what to do, but then he grabbed up a bit from the ground and began coming towards me. "Oh, it's \_on\_."

My aim wasn't that good, either, but I was fast and managed to dodge ninety percent of Gobber's ammo, and halfway through the fight, I realized I was laughing, genuinely laughing.

Childish as it was, stupid and silly as it might have been, this was kind ofâ€|sort ofâ€|\_fun.\_

## 25. Snow Viking

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 25: Snow Viking

**\*\*Okay, I just like, loved writing this chapter. I want to hug this chapter. And also, I already have ideas for the next. But I need a break.\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Although we had to end the snowball fight early to continue on with our work, it continued on subtly throughout the day.<p>

I was originally ready to let it drop, but Gobber stepped outside for "a breath of fresh air" just before lunch, and when he came back in, he clocked me with a snowball when he was sure I wasn't looking.

Seeing as there was no snow inside the forge that allowed me to retaliate, I satisfied myself with giving him a dirty look and then going back to my work.

But when we stepped outside to go to the Great Hall, I hit him with a snowball, throwing lighter than he had, as the lump on the back of my head was definitely growing bigger and I had no wish to permanently damage something on him as well.

I whistled innocently when he looked back at me.

I suppose he was thinking 'go big or go home', because the instant I touched the threshold of the Great Hall, a pace ahead of Gobber, I felt a hand on my collar and then something very wet and very cold was dripping down the small of my back.

I'm sorry to say that I let out a not-so-masculine yell and did a confused little jig as I attempted to get the snow out of my shirt, and, when I'd finally managed, I rounded on Gobber " only he wasn't there.

There was just me, standing out there in the snow, alone. I scowled and pushed open the doors to the Great Hall.

\* \* \*

><p>"I hope you're not too cold," Gobber said happily later that evening. "Because I've decided that we're making a snowman."<p>

"Uhâ€|" I tilted my head curiously at him. "What's a snowman?"

"You've neverâ€|" then he shook his head. "Never mind. Should've known ya haven', considerin' you've never been in a snowball figh'â€|"

"What\_ is\_ a snowman?" I repeated.

"Oh, you knowâ€|it's like thisâ€|" he picked up a small snowball and began teaching me how to make a snowman.

Halfway through the building, Gobber was in full flow about winter. "I know devastating winter is comin' up, but ya can' help but enjoy

it, especially with Snoggletog." He grinned, pleased, and waited for me to say something.

And I did. "What's Snoggletog?"

"Oh." The grin slid off his face. "You've never celebrated Snoggletog, either, lad?"

I shook my head. "Sorry."

"Not all tribes do," Gobber replied, and then he began explaining it to me, how Snoggletog is a day for family and friends, and sometimes they exchange gifts, and how, if you leave your helmet out, Odin will fill it with goodies.

\_Well, no wonder Outcast Island never celebrated it. We're not exactly the warm, fuzzy type, are we?\_

"That sounds nice," I said wistfully, and I hadn't even realized how lonely I sounded when I said it until Gobber fixed me with a curious look.

Determined to change the subject, I said quickly, "Hey, I'm gonna go to the Great Hall and grab a carrot for this thing's nose, alright?"

"Alrigh'," Gobber nodded without looking up from gathering thick tree branches for our snow Viking's arms.

Just as I turned to walk away, my boot found an icy patch and I began to slip, but before I even connected with the grass, I felt somebody's arms encircling me gently. "Whoa. Careful there, Hiccup."

I glanced up to see Stoick the Vast, one hand on my chest, the other on my back, steadying me. I balanced myself and stood up again. "Thanks."

But Stoick wasn't listening. "You're freezing," he said, as if this was news to him.

I frowned, confused. "Wellâ€¦I'm kind of cold, I guess, butâ€¦"

"Your skin is going to turn blue," he said disapprovingly. "Your lips are going to grow icicles and your tongue is going to fall out."

"It will not," Gobber objected loudly from his place beside our half-finished snow Viking. "My parents always told me that they would, and they ne'er did."

"All the same, I think you two should get inside," Stoick responded firmly. "C'mon. My day has just ended; you guys can come get warm in my house if you like."

"Butâ€¦our snow Vikingâ€¦" Gobber stared longingly at the snowman and all I said was, "C'mon, Gobber, we can finish him tomorrow."

Gobber shook his head. "He'll \_melt\_, " he explained, as if it was a story worthy of Romeo and Juliet. "We have to finish him first." Then

he looked pleadingly at Stoick, who muttered something about how there was a certain point where friendships ended, but he joined in the making of the snow Viking.

\* \* \*

><p>"That twig is too small for his arm, Stoick," Gobber commented, peering at a branch Stoick had chosen for the arm.<p>

"Well, it is supposed to be a Viking," I admitted, looking at the twig, too.

"Hmph." Stoick tossed the stick away.

"Grab us that carrot, would ya?" Gobber said, turning to me.

When I got back, it was almost finished, exceptâ€¦|

"Here," Stoick removed his helmet and handed it to me. "Finish it for us?"

I stepped forward and set the Viking helmet on its head and we all stared at him for a few minutes.

"Ah," Gobber said, "he's beau'iful."

I shivered a little and pulled my vest tighter around myself as I gazed at the snowman, too.

"C'mon," Stoick put a hand on my shoulder. "You two must be freezing."

## 26. Snoggletog

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 26: Snoggletog

\*\*This chapter was very fun :D Also, I've been spending today watching Treasure Planet fan videos with very angsty songs to them, so I guess that's what could be making me happy, too :D Also, I finished this chapter last night, but it was late by the time I finished (late for me, anyway xD) so, I'm assuming nobody would have gotten to read it until this morning and I kind of like to post stuff at a convenient time for my readers - or at least, I try to, I really do. \*\*

\*\*Anyway, next chapter is some major angst, but I've got to edit it first because I caught a typo or two last night, but I was so tired by that point that I was just like, 'I'll edit and revise this dang thing tomorrow!' xD\*\*

\*\*Also, seriously, guys, I need to work on my Treasure Planet and

Rise of the Guardians stories. I've been paying way too much attention to this one. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Winter on Berk was cold and harsh; the ice froze everything in sight, you could barely walk two feet without some kid pelting you with a snowball, and I woke up every day, shivering uncontrollably, ready to face another frigid day in the forge.<p>

And I absolutely loved it.

I put my riding vest on hold as a new project idea came to me, but I tried not to let Gobber see what it was, although I was sure he could help me, and he would probably make it better than I could.

Speaking of Gobber, he didn't just teach me about snowball fights and snow Vikings. He also taught me how to skate on a frozen pond in the forest, and how to catch snowflakes on your tongue.

He told me what day Snoggletog was, after I asked him, and he made winter one of the best times I'd ever had. It wasn't just him, either â€" it was Stoick and Astrid and heck, even Snotlout.

Throughout the coldest winter I'd ever experienced, I was truly warm for the first time in my life.

\* \* \*

><p>"Hey, lad!" Gobber yelled, poking his head in through the backroom of the forge, where I was working.<p>

I started, feeling almost guilty as I quickly tried to shove my project out of sight, but it hit the wooden floor with a loud, metallic clang.

"Oh. Sorry." Gobber looked guilty as he pointed to the floor. "You dropped something."

"I noticed," I told him, hoping he would go. I didn't want him to see this. But he kept staring at me, like he was waiting for me to pick it up, and I had a feeling he wasn't going to leave until I did. I tentatively scratched at the floor with my fingers, finally finding the hilt and jerking it up. I shoved it onto my worktable, shoving it underneath the vest.

"What was tha'?" Gobber questioned, still standing there.

"Nothing," I responded hastily.

"Hiccupâ€|" he said in his 'I know you're hiding something, so don't even think about lying' voice.

I sighed, feeling my cheeks redden as I reluctantly pulled the sword out from under the half-finished vest. "There. That's what I was making."

He gazed at the nearly-finished sword, and then he glanced back up at me. "Are ya sure you can wield this, lad?"



"It's not for me," I responded, staring very hard at the tabletop.

"It's good craftsmanship," Gobber said, inspecting it very closely. "Whoever gets it is going to be very lucky."

I heard the unspoken question in his voice, and I sighed again, but I still wouldn't look him in the eye. "It's for Stoick. He was talking just the other day about needing a new sword soon and Snoggletog is coming up, so I thoughtâ€|well, I thoughtâ€|" I shrugged self-consciously, wishing Gobber would put the stupid thing down.

"This is really good," Gobber said again, before setting it back down on the table.

"Do you think he'll like it?" The question fell from my lips before I really knew what I was asking.

Gobber glanced at the sword once, and then he turned that searching gaze on me. Without warning, he reached out and rubbed my shoulder before hugging me. I went rigid in his arms, not sure what to make of this.

"He's gonna love it, lad," Gobber whispered.

\* \* \*

><p>"I've never celebrated this before," I protested as Gobber pushed me into the Great Hall. "What will I do?"<p>

"Just act natural," Gobber responded. "It's just a party, Hiccup."

I groaned. I hated parties.

"Cheer up," he said, beaming. "Thanks for the present, by the way."

"Oh. Yeah." He must've found the new prosthetic hammer I'd made him. Seeing as I was a complete and total coward, I didn't have the courage to give people Snoggletog gifts to their face, so I left Gobber's in the forge for him.

When we entered the Great Hall, I saw it was packed with people, all singing weird carols and holding presents for each other.

I smiled as I watched everybody crowd around the fire, belting out whatever Snoggletog songs came to them, and I noticed they all held hands as they sang.

Gobber joined the group and I just backed away, into a very quiet and dark corner that involved no singing or touching.

I took a seat in a wooden chair, smiling and watching everybody else sing.

Later that night, when I was sure Gobber was too involved in his spirited talk with Mr. Hofferson to notice me, I slipped out of the Great Hall and headed instead for the forge. I grabbed the sword for Stoick and slipped back out, towards his house.

As I walked beneath the stars, I began thinking of how much my life had changed since arriving on Berk. It had definitely been for the better, I decided, as Toothless nudged my palm.

I paused on the chief's doorstep, carefully placing the sword on the porch before pulling out my sketchbook and ripping out a page before jotting down the following words:

\_Stoick,\_

\_I just wanted to thank you again for putting up with me so much while I'm here. This sword is for you, as a thank-you. And because\_

I hesitated, my charcoal stick poised above the page. I couldn't say it. I couldn't. Just as I scratched out the last two words, I suddenly heard a voice. "'Hey! Get off myâ€"oh, Hiccup, it's you." Stoick smiled easily as he approached me. "What are you doing out here, away from all the celebrations? Snoggletog isn't supposed to be spent alone."

"Uhâ€|wellâ€|" I hesitated.

What if he didn't like it?

I pulled out the sword that I'd spent so many hours making and I hesitantly handed it to Stoick. "Happy Snoggletog, sir," I whispered.

He just stared at the craftsmanship for a second, fingering the blade. Then he turned that gaze on me. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," I whispered, staring at the snow-dusted steps. It felt as if my throat was rapidly growing smaller, constricting my breathing. I swallowed and took a breath before Stoick put a hand on my shoulder. "Why don't you come inside and get warm, Hiccup?"

"Alright." I nodded. It felt nice that he was inviting me inside, but his words kept ringing in my ears: \_"Snoggletog isn't supposed to be spent alone."\_

When we were inside, Stoick seated me at the kitchen table and pulled out a chair for himself, but instead of sitting in it, he disappeared.

He came back with something behind his back and I tilted my head curiously, wondering what it was before he suddenly brought it out and held it out to me. "Um. This is for you. Happy Snoggletog."

I could only stare at it. It wasâ€|it wasâ€|

It was a helmet.

He let it drop into my hands when I reached for it, and I wanted to thank him, I really did, but I just kept staring at the helmet clutched in my hands. I slowly moved my fingers over the top, looking at each individual groove and scratch.

There was a long silence.

"Do youâ€¦do you like it?" Stoick asked tentatively, some ten minutes later.

I still didn't speak; I just kept staring at it.

"Because if you don't, I completely understand, Iâ€¦"

CLANG. Without thinking, I dropped the helmet on the table and wrapped my arms around Stoick's middle, the highest point of him I could reach.

I felt his arms wrap around me, and I blinked back tears, because a stupid helmet should not make me feel so weepy.

"Thank you," I whispered, when I could speak again.

To my relief, he didn't make me talk. He just hugged me tight and whispered, "You're welcome."

## 27. Not Completely Sure

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 27: Not Completely Sure

\*\*Guys, I'm sorry. THIS IS NOT THE ANGST CHAPTER, I'M SORRY. It was meant to be, but this got way too long for me to even slip the beginning of the angst into. But, I promise you, I have the next chapter already written and I WILL post it within a few hours. It'll probably be about nine or ten tonight, so keep a watch! :D\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I didn't remember much from that night, just Stoick and I talking, really, but I think I must've fallen asleep at one point, because I remember feeling something warm and rough against my cheek, something that smelled like dirt and pinecones. It reminded me of home, and I snuggled closer to it, mumbling something, but I'm not even sure what I said.<p>

"Shh, shh. Go back to sleep, Hiccup."

I became aware of a strange rocking motion and as I looked up, I realized I was in Stoick's arms. A large and very proud part of me wanted to protest that I was just fine, that I didn't need to be carried and that I could walk myself.

But a very small part of me that I never gave free reign, a part of me I never listened to, urged me to stay quiet. It told me that I wanted this and in truth, I always had. I had just never listened to the part of me that wanted a father, because I was always too

proud.

But here, in the dead of night, nobody could see my moment of weakness. Nobody cared if I was weak. I could pretend to be asleep, and nobody would have to know how much I wanted this to last forever.

I heard the sound of creaking wood and then, I was being lowered onto a bed and a blanket was being pulled over me.

I heard something being set down on a piece of wood, but I just kept my eyes closed, tugging the blanket closer around me. It didn't really keep the cold out, and I shivered a little bit, but I didn't plan on saying anything.

Before I got any farther in my thought processes, however, something very warm and very heavy was lowered over me.

I very reluctantly opened my eyes to see Stoick standing over me, his fur cloak on me. I wanted to protest, again, but again, I just kept silent and pulled the cloak closer to me, realizing it carried the same smell of dirt and pinecones, the smell of home.

"Good night" Stoick whispered and his mouth quit moving too soon, as if he'd planned to say something more but decided against it at the last second. He didn't move for a few long seconds and finally, I heard him add in a very low whisper, "son."

"Good night, Dad," I whispered, letting my eyes fall closed.

I heard him give a sharp intake of breath, a quick gasp, as if surprised, and then the wood creaked loudly underneath his feet just before he shut the door.

It took me all that time to realize what I'd said wrong.

\* \* \*

><p>When I woke up the next morning, I realized I wasn't cold. Winter on Berk lasted way too long for it to end so abruptly, but I wasn't the slightest bit cold. I sat up a little and heard a strange, muffled sort of thump.<p>

Looking around, I realized it was Stoick's fur coat.

I glanced around the room and heard birds twittering outside the window, talk and laughter even this early.

I didn't recognize the room, but I guessed it must have been the spare bedroom Stoick had offered me.

The memories of last night came rushing back to me and, as they did, I felt my face heat as I vaguely remembered calling him 'dad'.

I hadn't meant to; it had just slipped out, because of how much I'd been thinking of wanting a real father last night; not Alvin the Treacherous, but somebody real, who actually cared about me.

The moment I thought of Alvin the Treacherous, the guilt came roiling in, only made worse when I glanced over at the Viking helmet on the

table beside the bed.

\_You're lying.\_

I tried to assuage my conscience, but nothing worked; desperate to get away, I leaned over and prodded Toothless awake. He was sleeping right beside my bed, I guess because Stoick wasn't aware of the way we slept. I guess that was to be expected; who would think anybody would use a dragon for their pillow?

Toothless blinked sleepily up at me, communicating that he wanted to sleep. With that, he drew his wings resolutely around himself, curled into a ball, and shut himself away from me in a large ball of black scales.

"I could do this all day," I told him, bored, crossing my arms and leaning back against the side of the bed.

He lifted his head and hissed sleepily at me, then curled back up.

"Ugh. Fine. Whatever." I stood and left him lying there, but he sprang up quickly enough and followed me.

I grabbed Stoick's coat off the bed and carried it in my hands as I opened the door and padded quietly down the stairs.

But halfway down, I paused. I heard voices coming from the kitchen, Stoick and Gobber, and I was about to just keep going when I heard my name.

"â€|gave Hiccup a helmet, Stoick?" Gobber sounded incredulous.

"That isn't what this is about," Stoick said dismissively, eagerly. "You know what I'm trying to get to, Gobber."

"He's not your son, Stoick."

There was the sound of something being slammed; and then Stoick's cold, steely voice broke the thick silence. "I know that, Gobber."

I tilted my head closer, wanting to hear more, but as I leaned forward, my boot creaked on the stairs and the voices from down there ceased.

"Did you hear something?" Stoick asked.

"Just the house settling, Stoick," Gobber replied unconcernedly.

I continued on downstairs, still clutching Stoick's coat. "Um. Here, sir." I tentatively offered him the fur cloak and he barely glanced at it. "Put it in the chair, Hiccup, there's a good lad. Right." He turned to Gobber. "Would you two like a spot of breakfast with me?"

As we sat down and began to eat, Stoick and Gobber began a conversation that was way too formal.

Then Stoick said something that caught my attention. "â€|leaving for Bashem-Oik Isle, of course."

"What?" I glanced up from my plate and frowned. "You're leaving?"

"I must've forgotten to tell you," he took a bite of eggs and chewed and swallowed them before continuing, "I've got a meeting with the chief of the Bashem-Oiks today to sign a peace treaty with them. I'll be back by tonight."

"When are you leaving?" I asked.

"In twenty minutes," he responded. "I'm cutting it a little fine, but what's life without a little risk, right?" his gray eyes twinkled.

"Right," I nodded, smiling a little.

\* \* \*

><p>Just before Stoick stepped on the ship, he and Gobber clasped hands and then he turned to me. He pulled me into a hug, in plain sight of everybody, and ruffled my hair. "Be good, won't you, Hiccup?" he said anxiously, like I was his slightly rebellious son.<p>

I wasn't completely sure I disliked the analogy, and that scared me.

As he stepped onto the ship, Gobber and I stood on the docks and watched his ship until it disappeared into a speck on the light pink horizon.

## 28. The Beginning of the End

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 28: The Beginning of the End

\*\*Here it comes! The ANGST! OMG, what is up with two of my certain readers giving me wonderful ideas? I'm not naming names until their chapters come out, but they both read Overachiever and I used their ideas in that as well! I might use them here, I'm not sure.\*\*

\*\*The angst is gonna continue on into the next chapter, but it's gonna be a lot thicker. ;-) Also, you guys' reviews made me smile like an idiot :) \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I was sitting in the backroom of the forge later that day, in the early evening, running my hands along the ridges of the Viking helmet Stoick had given me last night, lost in deep thought.<p>

I knew it was common practice for a Viking boy to receive a helmet

when he was in his teens, but it wasn't just for anyone to give it to him; it was almost always his father.

I was so lost in thought that I didn't realize I wasn't alone in the forge until I heard Gobber's mismatched footsteps getting closer and closer to the backroom.

And then he yanked the curtain open from the other side and said in a tense, urgent voice, "Hiccup, come quickly."

Bewildered but jarred by the urgency in his tone, I set the helmet down on the worktable and rushed out after him, only to see a ton of people crouching behind the forge, axes and spears at the ready.

"What's going on?" we whisper-shouted.

"Shh!" chastised Spitelout, readying his axe.

"You're not needed," Helga replied dismissively, unsheathing her sword and inching forward very slightly, "Hoark caused a big stink for nothing."

"What's going on?" I repeated, and Helga jerked me down beside her and explained everything in a low, tense voice.

"The Murderous are here. Sheep-rustling, I suspect. They knew our chief would be gone today, I guess, but how they knewâ€|" she rolled her eyes and released me. "â€|the cowards."

Gobber looked disappointed. "I thought there was REAL danger! I was thinking Outcasts!"

I knew what sheep-rustling was. The Outcasts had done it â€" and had it done to us â€" far too many times to count.

I, unfortunately, also knew the chief of the Murderous tribe. Not very well, but well enough to know he was nothing but bad news.

The scariest thing about that guy was probably that he never spoke. Tall, beefy, tattooed out the yin-yang, just like your traditional Viking, but with never a word to say.

He sometimes grunted, and his assistant Gumboil would translate his grunts into coherent sentences, but how he managed to do that, nobody was sure.

Helga began to stand, but I grabbed at the waist of her plain brown dress and said, "Wait. Shouldn't we think up a better plan other than 'scatter'?"

She looked surprised. "No."

"Just an idea," I shrugged, "but I think they'd get a lot more startled if we shot one of Toothless' fireballs."

"You could be right," Gobber admitted, looking down at Toothless.

"Toothless," I said quietly, "fire a warning shot."

He sent a blast of icy blue light into the darkening sky and there were startled cries.

From then on, there was complete pandemonium.

"RUN!" shrieked one of the Murderous men, but then I heard Gumboil's oily voice, yelling for quiet.

"Slow down, men!" he chastised, but before anything else could be said, Helga stepped out, her sword gleaming in the faint, leftover light from Toothless' fire.

It didn't take much more than that to shake up the Murderous than they already were. One of the men fainted dead away and one of the women gave an annoyed grunt and set about trying to revive him.

The rest of us closely followed Helga, stepping out from behind the forge as well, and, though the other Murderous were drawing their swords and getting ready to fight, Gumboil stopped short, staring directly at me.

Madguts grunted.

In that instant, I knew from their glittering, dark eyes that something was very, very wrong.

"Get out," Helga ordered, in a voice of deadly seriousness.

A few Murderous gave derisive laughs, but Gumboil didn't. He edged closer towards her, and she blocked him with her sword.

He breathed very slowly in and out, reaching for me, as if trying to assure himself it was me.

With a sudden and unpleasant jolt, I realized I hadn't grown much since the last time the Murderous had been on Outcast Island.

Which must meanâ€¦|which must meanâ€¦|

I raised my eyes to Gumboil's, shaking my head frantically, trying to communicate without words to please, please, please, not say anything.

"Oh," he said quietly, those black eyes glittering even brighter in the dim light, "and what do we have here?"

## 29. Sledgehammer

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 29: Sledgehammer



\*\*Yes. I know. It's angst. Be quiet. The end was an idea given to me by Origami Star, so special thanks to her/him for this angst that I adored writing :D This chapter and what I have planned for the next actually kind of remind me of Lion King II when Kovu gets kicked out and all the animals sing that 'he is not one of us' song. IDK. It was sort of inspired by that. I don't know.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I guess it was pretty pathetic of me to hope that Gumboil wouldn't say anything. I guess it was even more pathetic to stand there like I did, then wave at him awkwardly saying, "Hi" which I did also.<p>

Gumboil froze right there on the battlefield, and Madguts did, too, their small, beady eyes boring holes in me. I tried to avoid their gazes, noticing the other Murderous had followed their chief's lead and had stopped cold, looking at him for further directions.

I noticed other members of my tribe â€" I mean, Berk's tribe â€" sneaking up behind the Murderous and readying their weapons. It didn't seem like a very sporting way to win the fight, but I had more pressing problems. Such as, what was I going to do about Gumboil?

He definitely recognized me, as did Madguts.

"Erâ€|so, great to see you all again!" I said brightly. "But I wish I'd known you guys were coming, I could've prepared somethingâ€|tea, maybe some biscuitsâ€|I don't knowâ€|I'm terribly unpreparedâ€|I'm thinking maybe you guys should just go back to the Murderous Mountains and come back with a long-term notice instead."

"Very funny," Gumboil wagged a black-gloved finger at me. "But I'm afraid we don't have a choice but to stay." He shook his head, grinning like a Cheshire cat. "Incidentallyâ€|" he added, almost as if it were an afterthought, "â€|how does one like you end up on Berk in the first place?"

"Oh, that's a long and complicated story," I replied politely. "I'd like to do it justice, you see, and I'm afraid I don't have time for that right now. You'll have to come back later if you want that particular tale."

"Oh, I think I'll survive without it," Gumboil spat, eyes glinting.

"Too bad," I responded, watching Helga take out another member of the Murderous tribe with one blow from her sword hilt.

"Yes, isn't it just?" Gumboil agreed. "Maybe next time, Hiccup."

"Erâ€|so how do you two know each other?" Gobber asked, clearly trying to keep their attention off Helga.

"Well, we saw each other every year or so, I think it was?" Gumboil looked questioningly at Madguts, who nodded. "Yes, every year. When we visited Outcast Island."

"What?" Gobber had zoned back in at the worst possible moment.

"O-Outcast Island, did you say?"

"Didn't you know?" Gumboil said, seemingly honestly surprised.  
"Hiccup's an Outcast."

A chill silence seemed to settle over the scene and the thunder rumbling overhead became very distant to me. Gobber turned to look at me and he didn't say any words, but then, he didn't need to: the betrayal in his eyes spoke for him.

"It's not true, is it?" he managed through white lips, just as the sounds of splashing water and clinking chains reached our ears.

There was a sort of off-key whistling and then Stoick emerged from the other side of the forge. When he realized the Murderous were there, he rested a hand threateningly on the hilt of his sword, but Madguts simply gave him a curt nod and beckoned his tribe to follow him.

Gumboil looked longingly back at me, as if wanting to see how this played out, but he had no choice but to follow his chief.

As they disappeared around the corner of the forge, Stoick sent a few men and women after them to make sure all they did was get back in their boats and sail away, and when they'd disappeared, Stoick turned to us and smiled brightly. "So!" he said cheerfully. "What's going on?" he seemed to realize something definitely was going on, because his smile flickered for just a second, and in the blip between when it did and when he managed to fix it back on his face, I saw a hint of uneasiness.

Gobber was still staring at me as if unable to believe his eyes and I knew nobody else was going to answer him.

"Hiccup?" his voice went up just an octave, becoming higher with concern and fear. "What's going on?"

"WHAT'S GOING ON IS THAT THIS BOY IS AN OUTCAST!" Mildew had elbowed his way to the front of the crowd, and his staff was pointing at me.

"That's not funny, Mildew," Stoick growled.

"Good," he replied, "Because it's no joke, Stoick."

Stoick turned uneasily back to me. "He's kidding, isn't he, Hiccup?"

He waited for me to deny it. I just shook my head wordlessly, miserably, unable to even look Stoick in the eye as I did.

"No!" Stoick yelled, as if, if he said it loud and long enough, it might make it untrue. "No! Hiccup, it's not true! you're not!"

"I'm so sorry," I whispered hoarsely. "I didn't mean for it to happen! I meant to tell you before!"

"Oh, yeah?" some of the shock of five minutes ago seemed to have

melted away, being replaced by cold, hard anger. "And when did you plan to tell us?"

I flinched back from the harshness in his voice, my hands still clasped in front of me, my eyes still fixed on the grass. "Iâ€¦I don't know."

"Look at your chief when he's speaking to you," one of the men snarled at me.

"Apparently, he's not your chief," Mildew interjected, his pale blue eyes glinting dangerously.

\_But he could've been.\_

I swallowed. "Iâ€¦"

"You know what we do to Outcasts," Mildew continued in a voice like steel. "You must've known the penalty, boy. Stoick." He turned expectantly to the chief, whose eyes were cold and hard, like stones.

It seemed incredible that just last night, this man had tucked me into bed. He'd called me 'son'. I'd called him 'dad'. There had been something. But now it was gone.

There were whispers from the crowd, all listing the punishment they thought Stoick should give me, but Stoick listened to none of them.

He stared at me for a long second, and I saw something there, betrayal and hurt and disappointment, but not anger, no, not anger. What was in his voice didn't carry to his heart, and that gave me hope, before his next words wiped it away. "Go, Hiccup. You are not welcome here anymore."

I should've expected this, but it didn't make it hurt any less. "I'm sorry," I whispered.

\_You deserve this.\_

The guilt eating away at me told me I did, but when I darted another anxious glance at Stoick, his eyes told me I didn't.

"I never meant for it to happen this way," I said quietly, and as I turned to go, Mildew's voice rang through, loud and clear and cracked.

"Wait a second, Stoick," he said, "you're justâ€¦sending him off the island?"

"Isn't that what we do to Outcasts?" Stoick demanded coolly.

"I thought we did it differently," Mildew argued. There was something about the way he said 'differently' that made me sure I didn't want to see this, but within a few minutes, the crowd was murmuring amongst themselves and then yelling their approval for whatever the tribe normally did.

Stoick glanced at me and I nearly gasped. He was standing straighter

now, one hand resting firmly on the hilt of his sword, and the cold, sad look in his eyes had returned, stronger now more than ever.

It had been so long since I had last seen it.

It made it even worse to know I'd caused it, and so I said the only thing I had left to say. I began thinking of everything that had happened to me since I'd been on Berk, the way Stoick had given me the Viking helmet and just held me in his arms without making me talk, the way he'd carried me to bed even though I could've done it myself, the way he started making that stupid snow man with us, the way he would ruffle my hair sometimes and just smile and make me believe that everything was going to be all right. "I'm so sorry, Dad."

I didn't struggle to change it. I just stood there.

There was a collective gasp from the watching crowd, and nearly everybody's heads swiveled to look at Stoick, who, for just a second, looked as if he were about to hit me. His large hands clenched into fists, before he said, "Don't ever call me that again." His voice was low, deadly, dangerous. It was impossible to believe this was the same man from last night. "I am not your father. And you—" he looked down at me and shook his head very slightly, as if making a decision. "—you're not my son."

The words hit me like a sledgehammer, and, like a sledgehammer, there was actually a flash of physical pain, hitting me over and over again in the chest, in my heart, where I could feel it, and nothing could stop it. It didn't matter what happened to me now, because this pain was sure to kill me.

### 30. Traitor

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 30: Traitor

\*\*I KNOW IT'S ANGST, OKAY? \*\*

\*\*Anyway, this idea was actually suggested to me by Piano-Girl-24389. I don't think she (I'm assuming the 'she' because her username is Piano-GIRL, but normally, I'm very careful with gender assumptions on here, even when I'm ninety-nine percent sure of their gender) even REALIZED she gave me the idea, but she is awesome for having it! She assumed I was going to have it in here, but that was not my original intention at all! In fact, what happened to this fanfiction in my mind is quite different from what actually happened.\*\*

\*\*But I'm grateful this person suggested the idea, because I've had it in my head for awhile now, this mental image of this AU Hiccup in front of Stoick on the ground during a really bad storm, and he's kind of glaring up at him, but at the same time, he looks really

afraid, and he's being held down. \*\*

\*\*Well, I'm sorry for boring you all. Really long AN, I know, so I'm sorry. Also, to all you people who think you ramble when you leave a review on this story, don't feel bad. Just read my ANs! xD \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>There was silence now, the kind of horrified, 'what's-going-to-happen-now' silence. Mildew glanced uncertainly between me and Stoick, a trace of a smile lingering on his features.<p>

Before anybody else could speak, Stoick turned abruptly away from me. "Hold him down."

The icy hand of fear grabbed me and held me when I heard those words and I was stuck in a memory.

"\_Hold him down," Norbert snarled at one of the men and the man fell over himself to obey, pinning my arms over my head, hot breath on my ear as he leaned down to pick up his swordâ€|\_

Strong arms were around me and I was suddenly struggling just to breathe, because it was like torture to be unable to run or defend myself.

\_He unsheathed his beautiful weapon and held it up to the light, watching the lightning reflect blindingly off the steelâ€| \_

I struggled fruitlessly, trying to get away, but the men holding me had grips like iron.

"\_Nice and sharp, Hiccup," Norbert said in a placating tone, moving towards me, closer, closerâ€|\_

"Should we kill the Night Fury, too?" Mildew asked, nearly slobbering. I caught a glint of triumph in his eyes.

"\_What about the Night Fury, Norbert?" his second-in-command asked breathlessly. "I mean, that thing's hugeâ€|"\_"\_

I suddenly found I couldn't breathe. I opened my mouth to speak, but Stoick answered the question before I could.

"No," he replied to Mildew. "The Night Fury will run when he realizes his rider is dead, and the dragon won't be able to survive long without a rider anyway. We are only prolonging his death, it's true."

\_They decided to let Toothless live.\_

\_It was the first time I would ever try to escape from Outcast Island and Alvin found me there on Hysteric Isle within two days of my escape.\_

\_He always caught up to me in the end.\_

"Hold his arm still," Stoick instructed, kneeling down beside me. He rolled up my sleeve, and one of the others closed his fingers around

my elbow, holding my arm stiff.

Stoick gently touched the blade to my arm, testing it and appeared satisfied when a drop of blood came out. I looked away as he examined my arm, and I could only imagine what he must be thinking about the scars on there.

But he wasn't looking at the scars. He was shoving the blade into my arm and my skin was burning. I'd learned that crying out in pain only got you a worse beating, so I tightened my lips, and whimpered in the back of my throat, but not a sound reached my tongue.

Finally, the blade moved and I lifted my head just before it was shoved down again. I didn't get to see what he'd done, and I wasn't sure why he'd done that, but I had more pressing problems.

Stoick was closing in on me fast, holding the sword point just above my head. He didn't say anything and somehow, that made it worse. His hand shook slightly, and then the blade was aimed at my chest, not at my head. He brought it closer to me and I wanted to close my eyes and look away, but I forced myself to speak. "Please."

He lowered his sword suddenly, eyeing me with disgust. "You think begging is going to get you anywhere?"

"Look after him," I rasped. "Please. Look after Toothless. Don't let him die."

Stoick's brow suddenly cleared and he stared at me as if he couldn't believe his eyes. "You'reâ€¦you're begging meâ€¦to protect him?" then his gaze hardened instantly. "An inch away from death and all you want isâ€¦"

"Toothless," I repeated. "That's all I ask. Please. You've been so kindâ€¦you know he's not bad, Stoick." My voice trembled dangerously on the last few words.

Stoick's sword was raised, but his eyes were unexpectedly kind. The blade dangled in the air for a long moment, and at last, it was brought down again, resting at a point just above my chest.

He seemed to be fighting some painful internal battle as he held the sword above my chest, and the point trembled like his large hands.

Suddenly, there was a panicked roar. The sword dropped, falling to the ground and before the men released me, it fell.

Stoick's aim had been off by just a fraction, but there was a flash of pain in my side and bright red liquid soaked the side of my shirt.

The men released me then, looking around for the threat, but it was just Toothless, coming out of the forge. He ran up to me, lying on the ground and nudged me in the side. \_Don't scare me like that, \_he moaned.

"I'm fine," I told him, smiling. It seemed right that in a moment, Stoick would pick up his sword and kill me, but that I would die with Toothless at my side.

Toothless then noticed the blood. He stumbled backward, but then he raced to my side, his paws in a pool of my blood, but he didn't seem to care. He anxiously nudged my face with his nose, crooning softly.

"Hey, I'm okay," I rested a hand on his nose. "It wasn't deep enough to kill me." I didn't mention it didn't need to be.

Stoick's hands suddenly scrabbled around the ground and he'd picked up his sword, straightening up.

"He has to die, now," one of the women from the crowd declared solemnly. "He has been marked."

\_Marked?\_ I wondered, but I didn't have long to wonder because the moment Stoick got near me with that weapon, Toothless was in front of me, growling.

"Get away, Toothless," I whispered. "C'mon, go!"

The men reached over to hold me down again and I saw Spitelout kick out at my dragon's nose with his foot.

"Don't hurt him!" I said, in what I hoped was an angry, commanding tone, but seeing as I couldn't move, I wasn't really much of a threat if they wanted to hurt him. But I knew I had to protect him, seeing as I'd done a pretty poor job of that on Outcast Island, and I was supposed to be his friend, his protector, his defender!

As my heart began to twist with misery and guilt, I shoved it away. I'd lived my life shrouded in shyness, guilt, misery, loneliness. I wasn't going to end it that way, too.

As Stoick faced me again, I had only one tiny twinge of regret, and that was for Toothless. He would never allow himself to be ridden by somebody who'd killed me, or stood aside and let me die.

And if a dragon lives his life on the ground, it isn't really a life at all.

Toothless growled at Stoick, daring him to come nearer.

"Toothless," I murmured, "don't attack."

Toothless turned to me, his green eyes full of hurt, anger and confusion. He was wondering why he wasn't allowed to attack when I was in danger.

"Promise me," I whispered, "promise me you'll fly."

He nudged me again. \_Not with anyone but you.\_

"Toothless!"

Stoick took a step forward, and Toothless launched himself at my attackers, freeing me. When I'd rolled away and stood, yelling for him to stop, he complied. He ran to me and, lowering his head, flipped me over onto his back, spread his wings and took off into the night sky and I was just barely clinging on.

I re-situated myself as best as I could and hung on tightly to him around the neck, watching the people standing on shore becoming smaller and smaller the farther we flew.

We collapsed on an island about a day's long boat ride away from Berk, but I didn't think they cared enough to look for us.

Toothless curled up in a ball, watching me with concerned green eyes, waiting for me to come over to him. I stared into the ocean water, feeling tears build up in my eyes.

\_I'm not going to say I told you so. \_

All I wanted was for the voice to go away, but that was clearly the last thing it felt like doing. I had just gotten what I had deserved, and all because I hadn't listened to the warnings the voice gave me.

I listened to the voice call me stupid and useless as I stared into the water, feeling tears drip out of my eyes and run down my cheeks, onto my nose.

Toothless nudged me and I jumped slightly. I'd been so lost in my misery that I hadn't noticed him come up behind me. "You were right, Toothless," I whispered, but the thought didn't seem to give him any pleasure, "you were right. I should've told them the truth earlier."

Toothless opened his wings and I crawled over to him, clinging onto him, because he was my only lifeline, the only person who I knew would never leave me.

\_Stoick never loved you.\_

I sobbed harder, because I knew the voice was absolutely right. I clung to Toothless tighter, wishing for it to go away, but knowing I'd deserve it if it stayed.

A few tears fell onto my arm, the one with the sleeve still rolled up, and it stung badly from the salty texture of my tears.

When I glanced down, I gasped in horror, suddenly realizing what the woman in the crowd had meant when she'd said I was 'marked'.

There was still a bit of blood leaking out of the wound, but it was only deep enough to just scar, and even that might fade as I grew older.

The letters were indistinct from all the blood, but when I used my sleeve to soak it up, I saw the word clearly and I knew what it was.

Carved on my arm with the intent to scar was the word 'traitor'.

### 31. Confirmation

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me



\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 31: Confirmation

**\*\*Well, uh, hi there! If you've made it this far in my story, then wow. I can't believe I just hit 31 chapters. Like, I did once, in 'Shattered', but that was just a random collection of one-shots and drabbles to let Jack Frost have his angst. This actually feels...real, you know? Realer. And I'm not sure if 'realer' is a word, but let's just say for the sake of this argument, that it is.\*\***

**\*\*Anyway, why? :( like, seriously, why do you all hate Stoick so much? He CARES ABOUT HICCUP! If you liked Silver from Treasure Planet, then compare it to that, okay? And yes, I know I mention Treasure Planet entirely too much in these ANs, especially considering I don't think those fandoms even touch, and I think HTTYD is like, eons away from Treasure Planet, but I love both very much.\*\***

**\*\*Speaking of my other fandoms, I started a new Percy Jackson fanfiction \*coughs\*  
andi'dloveitifpeoplewouldreaditandyesi'mtakingadva  
ntageofloyalreadersbutseriouslythestory'stankingpl ease \*coughs\*  
\*\***

**\*\*Anyway, I hope you all have a great day and until next time! :D  
\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>The moment I saw the mark on my arm, something twisted inside me, something snapped. I could feel more tears coming, but I was so sick of crying that I wanted to just hold them back.<p>

The people of Berk hadn't called me a traitor. Mildew hadn't called me a traitor. Stoick hadn't called me a traitor.

He'd \_branded\_ me a traitor, almost too literally.

That thought made more tears trickle out, and though I tried to force myself to remember what Vikings were taught about crying and showing emotion and all that, I couldn't stop the tears from coming.

Toothless was growling softly, his anger ignited from the cuts on my arm.

\_I told you so. I warned you, Hiccup. I warned you that you could never belong, and what do you do? \_

I let him growl, I let him get angry and I just buried my head in his scales, enveloped in his wings, because for the first time in a long time somebody who I trusted completely was getting angry on my behalf, and it made me feel safe and cared for and so I let him do

it.

\_Hiccup, nobody feels the slightest bit sorry for you. You brought this on yourself.\_

I was shaking, my body racked with the tears, my arm still stinging from where the tears had hit it, but I couldn't really focus on anything other than the pain in my heart, aching and burning and throbbing like a physical wound, but I knew this type of wound wasn't reachable, and therefore it could never heal.

I had Toothless, of course, so I was never really alone, but I had never felt so much like it in my entire life.

I'd found something sort of like a family, something like a father, and I'd lost it all in one swift move.

The moment the words had left Gumboil's lips, everything had changed.

I tightened my grip on Toothless and I wasn't sure if the sound he made was supposed to be a pained protest or a word of comfort, but I didn't care. I just scooted as close as I could to him and let myself break down, because I'd been keeping everything inside for too long to keep it in any longer.

A cold breeze blew around us, reaching me from the gap in Toothless' wings. I shivered a little and he tightened his wings.

We stayed like that for the rest of the night, just me and him, once again alone.

\* \* \*

><p>As the first few rays of sunlight reached me from my encasement inside Toothless' wings, I stirred a little, trying to rouse myself.<p>

I hadn't really fallen asleep â€" I had replayed the events of the entire night in my head so often that it had become a background soundtrack, white noise that was easy enough to ignore, but it still kept me just miserable enough to prevent sleep.

I'd cried so hard last night that I felt numb and hollow now, and I moved in a scarily robotic fashion.

I tried to keep things simple and I tried not to think about last night, or the mark on my arm.

Toothless stretched his wings experimentally and a small pile of snow fell off his wings and onto the ground.

I frowned, glancing up into the blinding white sky out of which some snowflakes were still falling. "You didn't have to keep me warm so long if it was that cold out today, Toothless."

Toothless ruffled his wings and gave me his 'I'm too macho to get cold' face. I rolled my eyes at his stubbornness. "We'd better get going."

My voice carried no emotion or tone, and even I noticed. Toothless must've heard it, too, because his annoyance with me faded and he glanced at me concernedly.

I moved my shoulders back and forth, stretching a little, stiff from sitting still for so long.

Just as I moved to get on Toothless, he growled and sank down low, like a lion hunting its prey.

I knew when he had that look was a bad sign, so I sank to the ground, too. I knew you should never ask him a question when he was getting ready to attack like this. It could throw off his concentration.

He turned his gaze on me for a fraction of a second and used his nose to nudge me along, farther away, behind a couple of large boulders. He crouched behind them, too, growling at something I couldn't see. But I heard the crashing of the waves and loud yells and I knew it must be a ship.

I wondered vaguely if it was a ship from Berk, but the moment the island's name entered my head, my mind shut off and refused to let me go any farther.

I sank to the ground, landing on my backside, watching the snow pile up on my boots as I waited for Toothless' fierce growling to stop.

As I waited, I reached over and picked up a clump of snow from the ground, savoring the icy numbness spreading in my skin and wondering how long I'd have to stay like this before I froze to death, before the thought entered my head that Toothless wouldn't let me freeze to death.

I unconsciously toyed with the snow in my hands and, when I'd realized I'd made a snowball, my mind jumped to Gobber.

I want to say that I didn't feel anything when I thought of Gobber, but I did. My heart seared suddenly with a physical pain and I reached up to wipe my eyes, worried that maybe tears might lurk there, but they were bone dry. I didn't think I could cry anymore after I had last night.

I tossed the snowball as far away from me as I could, which wasn't that far, considering, and it landed a few feet away in another, larger pile of snow, making a soft sort of thumping sound.

Toothless' angry growling had stopped; his ears had perked up, his eyes had gone wide and playful again, although they still carried a touch of fear and anger.

"Glad to have you back," I whispered, rubbing his head. "What was that all about, Toothless?" I dusted the excess snow off my pants and stood, peering over the top of the boulder, spotting a ship in the distance, moving slowly because of the snow and followed by at least twenty others.

"Those guys must be really dedicated to reach their destination," I commented. "I mean, everybody knows you shouldn't go sailing in

winter, not here, at least. The ice will be setting in, soon. They're risking freezing to death."

Toothless nodded, but his eyes seemed to be saying something like, \_and oh, I hope they do.\_

But through the snow, I thought I saw what was painted in bright red on the white sail of the leading ship, and my heart seemed to stop beating. I felt like I was suffocating, like I couldn't breathe and I knew I needed air right then as my hands began to shake.

I felt myself hit the rocky, pebbly beach again, but I wasn't really paying attention; I was numb and I was shaking.

My mouth vaguely kept trying to form words, maybe the name of the tribe or where they were headed or maybe I was just trying to say Toothless' name to hear his moan, to assure myself he was still there with me.

My breathing seemed louder somehow and I struggled to make it softer, though I knew that the people in the ships couldn't possibly hear me over the snow and the roaring wind.

I met Toothless' eyes and sputtered, "Outcasts."

He nodded solemnly, confirming my worst fears.

## 32. No More

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 32: No More

\*\*Um. Yes. Firstly, I'm not REAL confident about this chapter, as this is basically just Hiccup warring with himself. If I end up thinking it sucks, I'll probably take it down. First - explanations\*\*

\*\*Hiccup - He's tired. That's all you need to know. He's tired of hiding, and he's tired of letting his enemy know how afraid he is. He's tired of running and hiding and he's sick of constantly being afraid, constantly looking over his shoulder. That's his real motive for doing this. It's not about Berk to him - he only has a very small shred of loyalty left to that island. That tribe rejected him. He's trying to move on. But it is about being tired, and I know I didn't come out and say this, but his mom was not for war at all, despite her name being Freydis the Fearsome (she's an OC :D) and Hiccup sees a way to prevent a war between his dad's tribe and the tribe he really wanted to belong to, and he sees that going back to Berk for a short while to prevent this and face Alvin can't be all bad, like he's carrying on his mother's...I don't know. You know what, it sounds way better in my head, so let me just slide back into my cold dark corner and try to write something of consequence. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I forced myself to keep calm. Seeing an Outcast ship meant nothingâ€|right? I'd been gone for months. They would've given up the search by now.<p>

Except I knew Alvin and I knew he never gave up.

The thought that he was out there somewhere in the ice and snow, braving the winter cold to find me made my stomach twist with sudden fear.

I kept sitting a few seconds longer, unsure if my legs could support me yet or not. My heart was hammering away in my chest and my hands were shaking.

My forehead was sweaty and I reached up to wipe it, nervously clenching and unclenching my hands into fists.

Toothless was watching me with concerned green eyes, as if waiting for me to go insane, maybe, but this was my version of insane, a quiet and terrified panic attack that I tried to tell myself it was useless to have, because sitting there letting the fear reach me wouldn't make things any better, it would just give the terror more time to sink in.

I swallowed several times and pushed my hair out of my eyes, telling myself numbly not to panic, that I could do this, but not one part of me believed the empty words I spewed to make myself feel better.

I knew I had to get away, just as soon as I could form a complete thought. When my hands stopped shaking and when my heartbeat slowed down just enough for me to be deemed 'calm', I lifted my head, gazing uncertainly and fearfully at Toothless. "We've got to get out of here, bud." I struggled to keep my voice calm, knowing I'd failed the instant I spoke the words, because Toothless let loose a concerned moan.

"Iâ€|I'm okay," I whispered soothingly, patting his head. He didn't seem entirely convinced, and the voice in my head certainly wasn't.

\_Liar. I don't know when you've ever been less okay.\_

I swallowed again and tried to focus on getting away, telling myself I wasn't a prisoner anymore. I was stronger than that. I had won back my freedom, and I wasn't letting Alvin take it away again, no matter how badly he'd startled me when I saw his ships.

The thought cleared my head a little and I found myself stable enough to climb on Toothless' back, fix my feet in the pedals, open and close his prosthetic tail, and whisper to him to take to the sky.

He spread his wings and took off into the blinding white sky and, as we did, I looked back through the lightly falling snow at the Outcast ships, feeling a shiver run down my spine. I squinted at them through the snow and whispered, "It's weirdâ€|it looks like they're heading towards Berkâ€|"

Toothless jerked his head forward, signaling we needed to keep moving.

"You're right, Toothless," I forced myself to say, but the words didn't come from me, they came instead from something else, only it was my mouth that formed the words.

As we flew on, though, something kept nagging at me.

The Murderous had known I'd been on Berk, and they'd known the people of Berk had been unaware they were sheltering an Outcast.

And whenever there had been blood feuds to be fought, while the Murderous had never openly chosen sides, they'd always been very friendly to the Outcasts, and they were about the only tribe we burgled from in a companionable way and the only tribe we let burgle from us without killing them for it.

We didn't sign any fancy peace treaties or anything with them the way the nicer and more civilized tribes sometimes did, but it was understood that we'd probably never start a war with them.

If the Outcasts were heading towards Berk, that could mean that the Murderous had sailed off Berk and immediately headed towards Outcast Island and revealed to Alvin my location. I told myself it was stupid, that after all these months Alvin probably didn't care. I'd landed on Berk in midsummer for Thor's sake, and it was in the dead of winter now.

But in my heart I knew Alvin would have loved to have found out where I was hiding.

I imagined him laughing on the deck of his ship, envisioning my terrified face when he landed on Berk. The thought made me feel hot all of a sudden, burning with anger and shame at the idea that Alvin was probably gloating over my terror right now. He wanted me to be afraid and the idea of that particular plan succeeding made me go rigid on Toothless' back.

I glanced uncertainly back at Berk and, even stronger than the anger, I felt guilt chewing at me, telling me that if the Hooligans wound up in a war with the Outcasts, it would be almost entirely my fault.

I bit my lip and Toothless, obviously sensing what I was thinking, growled in a low, fierce way, filled with pure anger at me, as if trying to tell me it wasn't my problem.

"It's not my problem, yeah," I replied, stroking his head to calm him down. Sure enough, he relaxed beneath my touch. "But it is my \_fault\_, and that makes it my problem."

Toothless growled at me again, trying to force me to remember the way the people of Berk treated me after learning I was an Outcast.

"Can you blame them?" I whispered. "I mean, I'm their enemy, bud. It's only natural. Imagine if somebody on Outcast Island got a hold of a Hooligan, you think we'd go easy on them? And notice," I was really getting into my stride now, "Stoick hesitated. At leastâ€" it was my turn to hesitate. "I think he did."

\_You mean you \_hope\_ he did.\_

I gritted my teeth, nails digging into my palms before suddenly finding a strength I didn't even know I had, and forcing the voice back. "And," I continued in a stronger way, "if you think about it, Stoick did try to spare me, didn't he? He told me to just get off the island! Without telling me to get off the island or giving me some sort of consequence for being an Outcast, I think Mildew probably would have stepped in and done it for him. He had to banish me, and who knows? He might never have killed me at all had you not interfered."

Toothless tensed beneath me and I could tell he was angry at me for what I was saying.

"I'm not saying that just because somebody's an Outcast, it means they deserve certain death," I continued quickly. "In fact, I think it's terrible, these wars between the tribes. And think â€" this is my chance to prevent one. I think I should do it, Toothless."

Toothless made a sound of protest, but it seemed weaker somehow â€" maybe I was convincing him even better than I was convincing myself.

"And no," I added, "this isn't about Berk anymore. I think this is about me. I have to learn to stop running and hiding, Toothless. That makes me weak. That shows Alvin I'm a coward. I'm not going to \_hide\_ anymore."

Toothless gave a noise of reluctant admittance, like he was giving me his permission to go. I knew I didn't need it, but I smiled anyway and hugged him tightly around the neck. "Thanks, Toothless." It felt good to know my dragon was backing my decision.

He veered around so he was facing the distant outline of Berk through the snow. "C'mon, Alvin," I whispered into the wind. "You don't scare me."

### 33. Nearly There

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 33: Nearly There

\*\*A/N: Posted from a borrowed computer, folks! :D But, I'm not confident in this chappie. I don't know what it is. It just...it feels...lame. Yes, yes, I know, you are probably all gasping and wondering how on earth a brilliant writer like myself (just kidding, I swear!) managed to be lame, but let me tell ya, it's quite easy when it's insanely early in the morning, which it was when I started this chapter. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I remember one thing Alvin taught me, back when I was on Outcast Island.<p>

"What doesn't kill you doesn't make you stronger, it's just nearly there," he'd growled, his voice echoing emptily in the cell he'd placed me in. "So, if I were you, I'd think long and hard about my next move."

And then he had walked away.

Maybe I remembered that day so clearly now because I was going to face him again, for the first time in a long time. Everything inside me went cold at the very thought, but I knew I couldn't hide.

Not anymore.

Vikings don't run, they don't hide. That's the coward's way out.

As I landed on the island, I heard frightened cries and realized the Outcasts must already be here. The moment I thought that, the voices got louder and louder, but now they were accompanied by harsh, thumping footsteps.

I sucked in a breath as I heard savage words in ragged voices, but it wasn't Norse they were speaking. They spoke in our mother tongue, Outcastese.

"\_I don't know why Alvin bothered with this one," \_grunted one Outcast. Most of the people from Outcast Island weren't terribly fluent in any other language, and so their Norse was broken and confusing, but they spoke Outcastese so perfectly.

Unsure what the Outcast had meant by what he'd just said, I tentatively peered around the corner, and, when I did, my heart jumped into my throat. Savage stood there with a few of his men, clutching Tuffnut by his long blonde hair and Ruffnut was being held captive by another Outcast, Fishlegs with another and then Astrid and Snotlout both had about five Outcasts each restraining them, and they were both still struggling.

It surprised me that Savage would be here, but, seeing as I had landed in the middle of the village, I suppose it was to be expected.

I was still just barely inching around the corner of a hut and finally, I took the plunge. I looked at Toothless. "You can stay here."

He growled at me, like, 'what are you thinking, Hiccup? I go with you! Always!'

"Iâ€¦I know," I sighed, "but I'm thinking maybe you should justâ€¦sit this one out."

He glared at me. \_'No.'\_

I sighed exasperatedly. "Fine," I muttered. "I'm going to step out there, okay? I'dâ€¦I'd really rather prefer you don't come with



me."

'\_I can defend myself just fine,' \_he insisted. \_'Stop worrying'.

—

Well, Toothless knew me and he knew telling a person like me to "stop worrying" was about as useful as telling me to go off and forget about him.

I sighed and turned back to Savage, inching out from behind the house and preparing to say something heroically brave, but before I could, I heard him mutter in Outcastese, \_"How did we even get tangled up in this mess? I agree with Ranok â€" the boy is probably hiding out somewhere, terrified out of his wits." \_

The moment I heard the words, I knew it had been the right decision to come here. \_"Who's hiding?"\_ I demanded aggressively, slipping into Outcastese easily.

Savage jumped, looking around. And then a truly evil smile decorated his brutal features. "\_Seems the little hiccup is braver than we thought, eh?"\_

"\_Leave them alone, Savage," \_I indicated the teens, standing there watching our conversation with confusion written all over their faces. They didn't understand Outcastese the way we did.

"Hiccup, what are you doing here?" Astrid demanded in Norse, but before she got any farther, Savage had a knife at her throat. "Shut it," he hissed, in perfect Norse.

I only knew Norse as fluently as I did because new traditions had been coming to Outcast Island for months and one of them was that all tribes should know the language of Norse.

"\_Leave them alone," \_I repeated.

Savage glanced down at her. \_"Alvin never said we had to deliver these captives unharmedâ€"|"\_

My heart thudded loudly in my chest. \_"Don't hurt them."\_

Savage laughed sarcastically. \_"Bold words," \_he hissed, straightening his helmet, \_"but do you think you could act on them? After all, you're just a hiccup."\_

"\_I won't hesitate," \_I replied calmly.

Savage exchanged looks with the other men and hissed to them in Outcastese, \_"Get Alvin. Now."\_

"\_Oh, looks like the little hiccup's got the best of everyone, now hasn't he?" \_I taunted. \_"Including the big, strong Viking Outcast?"\_

As the Outcasts scampered off to get Alvin, though, my heart thudded with fear. I couldn't fight them. I couldn't reason with them. I couldn't do anything to them without tearing Berk apart.

Savage grinned, showing his pointed teeth. \_"That's what you'd like

to hear, isn't it?" \_he tightened his grip on Astrid's braid and, while she remained silent, I recognized the stiffness of her jaw and knew she was in pain. I recognized the proud set of her jaw because it was a way to stop myself from crying out, one I'd used many times.

I opened my mouth to say something, but before I could, Tuffnut groaned, in Norse, "Hey, Hiccup, so, I know we banished you and all, but d'you mind telling your friends to loosen their grip a little?"

I wanted to yell at him that they weren't my friends, but before I could, the Outcast who had run off to get Alvin returned, with his chief in tow.

Alvin was suddenly in front of me, bending down next to me, running a grimy finger over my chin. I wanted to shove him away, to get as far away from him as I could, but I was frozen. "Long time, no see, Hiccup," he whispered.

He didn't kill me last time, and I don't think he's going to kill me this time, but he's nearly there.

#### 34. Taking a Gamble

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 34: Taking a Gamble

**\*\*A/N: GUYS I JUST THOUGHT OF THIS\*\***

**\*\*You know how Hiccup gave Stoick that sword for Snoggletog, way back in chapter 26? Stoick began using that sword instead of his old one, because his old one was wearing out. So he replaced it with the one Hiccup had given him.\*\***

**\*\*WHICH MEANS...\*\***

**\*\*That Hiccup was nearly killed at Stoick's hand with the sword he had given him earlier in the story. \*\***

**\*\*Isn't fate artistic?\*\***

**\*\*P.S: Forgive me -I'm terrible at writing action scenes. I do better with dialogue for some reason. Really, I'd be happy with my battle just being - "and Stoick and the others cut those mean old Outcasts into pieces and they all went home happy" - but I know I can't do that :P\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>I flinched away from Alvin's harsh touch, his rough fingers on my chin, but the moment I moved, several more Outcasts flanked me,

pinning my arms behind my back, making me feel vulnerable and defenseless.<p>

Toothless was growling nonstop at the sight of Alvin, the only person I had never once tried to stop him from attacking. He was edging forward, looking for a way to me around the Outcasts, and, without even looking up, Alvin said, "Gentlemen, this is just a friendly chat between two old chums. You may handle the Night Fury."

He spoke it in Norse, which surprised me, because that was the advantage Outcasts always had over their opponents: nobody could tell exactly what they were saying, because nobody else was fully fluent in Outcastese. As far as I remembered, the language had never made it past the waters filled with choppy rocks that marked the beginning of our land.

The other Outcasts nodded and retreated from us, one man pulling a coil of rope off his shoulder and edging towards Toothless, who growled and hissed flames at his attacker.

I wanted to run to him, to go to him, to protect and defend the one person I had failed so badly in a situation so similar, but Alvin seemed to have guessed what I was thinking. His grip on my chin had vanished and was instead replaced by a stronger, tighter one on my shoulders that left me in no doubt that he could pick me up and carry me away from here if he wanted.

When I had seen the other teens being held hostage by the Outcasts, I had been certain that coming back had been the right idea. Now, held so tightly by Alvin that I had no hope of escape, I wasn't so sure.

Maybe it would have been better to keep running, keep hiding, just keep being afraid, because fear was better than being stupidâ€¦

I shook my head to clear it and Alvin, obviously thinking that I was planning something with Toothless, tightened his grip so hard I winced.

"Now, Hiccup," he smiled, showing his teeth that had been filed down to strangely sharp points, "you happen to be the very person I came here for." As he spoke, I spotted other Outcasts out of the corners of my eyes, holding other members of the Hooligan tribe by the hair or beard, with knives or axes at their throats, confirming what I'd suspected since I'd landed on the island: Alvin hadn't needed the Murderous tribe's information about my location. He had known where I was, known, probably from the very start, and yet he'd waited to jump into action until the Murderous had confirmed it.

It scared me that he'd known for so long, maybe even watching me from a distance, which would explain his cruel smile now.

But how could he have known it would be Berk? The Hysteric tribe was easier to guess, much easier, because Alvin would've remembered what he told me about them â€" though Outcasts often worked alone, if there were allies to be had, they could be found in the Hysteric Tribe.

But he'd warned me against Berk, filled my ears with lies about how the chief was an evil, vile man who cared for nobody but himself. He

talked of how truly brutal Stoick the Vast was, a man who cared for only war, a man who wanted to live the scariest and most dangerous life possible for a Viking chieftain.

How could he have ever figured I'd willingly choose to go to Berk?

I shoved those thoughts out of my mind. There was no way I could afford to think of that right now. "I thought I might be," I replied, determined to keep things light, even though they looked darker and darker by the second.

Gobber and Stoick, I noticed, were also heavily flanked by Outcasts. They'd been beaten so easily today, when I knew the Hooligans were tough and brutal fighters who never surrendered.

"But, I mean, c'mon, Alvin, a full-scale invasion? Just for me? I'm flattered. Really. I didn't think I'd mean quite that much to you."

"Of course you do," Alvin said, in mock surprise. "How could we ever forget you?" His fingers were now so tight on my shoulder that my whole arm was going numb. He leaned forward and I could smell his putrid breath. "Despite how stealthy you think you are, Dragon Boy, you left a trail of clues a mile wide. It was easy, really."

It was as if he'd read my thoughts about his knowledge of my stay on Berk.

I swallowed and forced myself to meet his gaze, although I felt like sinking back down, lower and lower until I disappeared into the sand forever, where not a hair on my head or a stitch of my clothing was left of me to prove that Hiccup the Outcast had once sat on this very beach.

"That's a bit of a disappointment," I replied, trying to fight the panic that was choking me. "Because the next time I escape and the time after that, whyâ€¦I'll just have to work on my sneakiness, I suppose."

I could tell I was making him angry.

It had always been this way, though; he'd hated me for being able to make a light-hearted and most likely sarcastic remark no matter how dark things looked.

His brows drew down so low, like thunderclouds, before he forced the corners of his lips upward into a mocking smile. "Oh, you can try, sure," he snorted, "but you will never get away from me again."

I was shaking now, shaking and trembling and sweating from being so near him for so long without ever once making a move to defend myself, and from the implied threat in his voice and words. "I suppose all the other times have been what, harmless flukes?" I forced myself to smirk confidently, like I was merely mocking the man in front of me, like I had done so many times before, the one activity that had always gotten me into so much trouble.

"You can't win, Alvin. I say that to you every time and every time, you give me some lame threat about how I'm never getting away from you. It happened on Hysteric Isle and it happened every time after

that, too. Must we go through this again?" I gave a bored little sigh.

"Oh, no, Hiccup," Alvin gave a little laugh of his own, "you really don't understand this time when I say, 'never getting away'. Come to Outcast Island and you'll see what I mean." It wasn't a challenge; there was no 'I dare you' tone to his voice. It was a threat.

I swallowed. "No, I don't really feel like it. Sorry." I shrugged.

"Oh, but I insist," Alvin said. "Otherwise, I'm afraid we're just going to have to bring you against your will. You know me, Hiccup â€" I'm a patient, civilized manâ€" (I snorted) "â€"but I draw the line at fighting. You know me, Hiccup. I'm quite peaceful."

I would've laughed again had I not suddenly heard a choked sound coming from one of the Hooligans.

I looked around, my eyes scanning the crowd for whoever had attempted to speak, and suddenly Alvin's dark, murderous brown eyes gained a twinkle, a glitter of purest malice. "Surely you don't mind me taking him off your hands, do you, Stoick?" he smiled in mock sweetness at the Viking chief. "I meanâ€"by the looks of itâ€" he gestured to my sleeve, which I had rolled up earlier, fully revealing the 'traitor' still scabbing over on my arm. "â€"You've already decided you don't want him."

Stoick gave another weak sound in the back of his throat, but one of the Outcasts holding him hissed 'shh!' in Outcastese, holding the blade even closer to his throat.

"Unless, of course," Alvin continued swiftly, "you'd rather fight me on this? I'm a fair man, Stoick â€" my men will let you go." he snapped his fingers and hissed a command in Outcastese, causing the nine Outcasts holding Stoick to reluctantly release him and step back respectfully, waiting for their chief to make his move.

But of course, Stoick was stripped of his weapons. He had nothing at all. And it was crazy to think he'd even try and fight Alvin for me in the first place, because I was nothing to him anymore â€" and the healing cut on my arm proved it.

Nonetheless, Stoick shook himself proudly, as a Viking chieftain should, and he turned to face Alvin, opening his mouth to say something, but what, I'm not sure.

"It would be undoubtedly foolish for you to put the sake of your whole island on the line for one little boy," Alvin shrugged, "but if you choose to fight me for your boy, then, by all means â€" a war it is."

There was a long second of silence and then, all at once, the people of Berk began crying for him to leave it, that I was an Outcast and that I didn't matter enough to put the whole island at war.

Alvin's eyes gleamed. "I should've known," he shook his head, a chuckle building up in his throat. "You're more like me than I would have thought, Stoick." he turned away from Stoick, snapping at a few of his men in Outcastese to bring him some more rope to tie the rest

of the Hooligans and me up.

As the Outcasts slithered into the crowd of Hooligans and began binding them and as they bound me, I sat still, the cries of the people of Berk still ringing in my ears.

"He's nothing, Chief, he's nothing!"

"Sir, he's an Outcast!"

"You can't put the whole island at risk for him!"

They spoke of me like I was nothing " and to them, I really was.

I closed my eyes before hearing a bright, clear ringing noise, like stone on metal. As I looked up, I saw Alvin glaring at the crowd of Hooligans, clutching a heavy black stone in his hands. "Which one of you threw that?" he snapped angrily, and most of them stepped forward, raising their hands and claiming credit for the rock.

Gobber even spat at Alvin's feet before being yanked back into the crowd and tied up thoroughly.

Another rock flew and this time, I saw where it had come from. Stoick was weaponless, but there was a small pile of stones at his feet and he had the fierce look of a Viking getting ready to fight, and for some reason he reminded me of Viking fathers I had seen, getting ready to defend their child.

I shook my head to clear it of the notion and used the chaos of Alvin shouting at Stoick about something and issuing threats to the entire Hooligan village to scoot over to Toothless, also chained.

I struggled with his muzzle for a second or two, but eventually my fumbling and bound fingers found the buckles and I managed to undo it for him.

He moaned in thanks, wriggling his tail and attempting to break the ropes around his wings with his teeth.

I reached up to help him untie them as a rock that either an Outcast or a Hooligan had thrown collided solidly with my shoulder and I winced.

Man down, I thought hazily as I pushed myself up and Toothless snapped open his wings, roaring and greatly enjoying the chaos.

### 35. Unspoken Words

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?

## Chapter 35: Unspoken Words

**\*\*A/N:** I'm sorry. It's dumb. I'm sorry. Stoick is gambling a lot here, but he's doing it for Berk, mostly. He's also doing it a teeny tiny bit for Hiccup, because, c'mon. He still cares about the kid, Outcast or not. You can't just build a relationship like Hiccup and Stoick and just suddenly stop caring about each other.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I wasn't really sure what to do, so I just kind of stood there for a second in the middle of the grunts and groans from the different tribes as they fought for their freedom and Stoick spiritedly pitched rocks at the Outcasts until he could get his sword back.<p>

\_Resourceful, I'll admit, \_I thought to myself, watching Helga, who was already bound, use her forehead and swing it as hard as she could against a passing Outcast. She hit him in the chin and he fell, groaning. She leaned down, in an attempt to continue what she had started, I guess.

Toothless was looking around for a few Outcasts who weren't already being dealt with " and he found them. He charged off in pursuit.

I noticed Gobber pilfering swords and other weapons off the Outcasts and he grinned proudly when they didn't notice a thing.

I ducked as a hammer came flying out of nowhere, and then shot up again, my eyes scanning the area for Toothless to make sure he was okay.

I clung to the simple task and I wove my way in and out of the battle, ducking when it seemed necessary and at times, dropping to my knees and crawling. It was at a moment when I was crawling on my hands and knees through a forest of fast-moving legs that I became aware somebody was behind me. At first, I thought it was just my unfortunate habit of thinking somebody's watching me all the time, so I originally planned to ignore it, but the feeling kept growing stronger and stronger.

I finally looked away, back behind me, to see Stoick breathing hard and crawling up behind Outcasts and decking them with rocks from behind. He had his sword in his hand as well, the sword that I had made for him " Gobber must've managed to steal it back from the Outcasts.

He stood on his feet for a second, pulling one man's helmet tight around him, temporarily blinding him and, still clinging to the helmet with one hand, he brought the hilt of his sword down firmly on the man's head.

When the man passed out on the grass, Stoick shoved his sword deep into the man's back. When he withdrew it, I saw the blade was stained bright red with the Outcast's blood.

Stoick had spotted me also and he dropped to his knees and mouthed something to me; I wasn't close enough to hear what it was.

I was about to tell him that, with all due respect and all, it really

wasn't the time to be saying anything, especially not anything too long-winded, before I heard him yelling something different. "DUCK!" he yelled and I instinctively obeyed.

I felt something come so close it actually stirred up a wind that ruffled my hair slightly before passing harmlessly by.

Stoick didn't duck â€" he reached out and miraculously caught the weapon spinning end to end and gleaming in the late winter sunlight.

As he held it up and carelessly wiped a bit of blood off the edge of the blade, I realized it was an axe.

If he hadn't warned me, I would have had that blade sticking out of my head right now.

The thought made me wonder why he'd told me to duck and then I wondered if I was thinking too hard about these things. His command was probably as instinctive as my obedience.

I shook myself and scanned the fight again, struggling to remember the last task I had set myself before remembering: Toothless.

I lifted my head and looked around for him, hoping desperately to see his dark scaly face and piercing green eyes somewhere in the fighting crowd, but there was nothing.

What I did see was welcome news: the Outcasts appeared to be losing. At least, that's what it looked like before I was suddenly jerked up by the front of my vest and Alvin's hot breath was on my ear, filling my nose. He dragged me across the snow, across the dead and brown grass, muttering to himself, sounding close to deranged.

I wanted to say something, maybe something to piss him off or distract him enough to let him go, but before I could do that, Stoick had looked through the crowd and locked eyes with me. His gray eyes went wide with horror as they traveled slowly from me to Alvin.

Almost instinctively, it seemed, he reached up and tossed the axe he still gripped in one hand.

It went spinning through the crowd of fighters, and everybody who saw it coming ducked. It shouldn't have done anything, it shouldn't have reached us â€" Stoick hadn't thrown it hard enough for it to help anyone.

But, by some miracle, it hit Alvin, hard, in the metal helmet. The sound of wood on metal was almost painful to hear.

I gritted my teeth as I listened to the sound, before Alvin gave a pained grunt and slowly leaned down. I caught the glint of the axe from the sunlight. He inspected it closely for a second. The fighting had stopped now that everybody saw what Alvin had come for. I saw Toothless being held back by Gobber in the crowd.

"Oh, ho," he said, and he seemed, strangely, satisfied, unlike two seconds before. It was as if he'd wanted somebody to challenge him, was afraid that nobody would challenge him. "Soâ€" he gave the axe a



careless flick and everybody ducked.

It landed, with a heavy thump, on the grass beside Stoick, who picked it up again and twirled it a little around his hand, waiting for Alvin's decree.

"I guess I was wrong," Alvin shrugged his thick shoulders. "I assumed a fight wasn't what you wanted, Stoick."

"I'm more like you than I would have thought, Alvin," Stoick retorted coldly and I sensed a dark and bloody history between the two Viking chieftains "I could tell by the stiff set of Stoick's jaw that he'd come across Alvin once before.

I waited for Alvin's next move.

"Very well." Alvin smiled smoothly and easily. "I suppose if a fight is what you want, then a fight is what you'll get."

"Pleasure," Stoick replied grimly, his dominant hand tight on the hilt of his sword, his non-dominant one even tighter on the axe.

Alvin's smile widened and, as it did, I thought I caught a hint of malice in it and I knew something was very, very wrong. I knew by his glittering, dark brown eyes that he planned some form of treachery of the lowest kind.

I opened my mouth to shout a warning to Stoick, but before I could, Alvin had grunted to Savage, who stood at his side, "Take him."

The world was a dizzying blur as Savage spun me around in his arms and, next second, a knife was at my throat.

I couldn't really breathe, much less warn Stoick about anything Alvin might be planning.

Savage must've heard my wheezing gasps, because his grip on my neck tightened ever so slightly, restricting my breathing even more and making it painful to swallow.

I thought I knew what that was about. Alvin had taught me when I was much, much younger that if you could hear your victim breathing while your hands were pressed against his throat, your grip wasn't tight enough.

I struggled to draw breath as everybody else watched Stoick and Alvin transfixed.

The two chieftains stood eye-to-eye, silently daring each other to come nearer. They must've agreed to fight each other, because Stoick drew his sword with a swish. "My conditions," he began icily, "are that you leave the people of Berk forever alone and in peace if I succeed. And that includes Hiccup." His gray eyes flashed.

Alvin's nasty smile widened; maybe he sensed something more in what Stoick had said, but I dared not hope. "Reasonable ideas," he said quietly, stroking his beard thoughtfully with his fingers. "Although, I admit, I'm surprised by you, Stoick. Do you include this boy in your village, even after branding him a traitor?" he gestured

casually to me.

There was a pause.

Stoick's eyes flicked over to me, Savage clutching a chunk of my hair painfully, knife at my throat. I swallowed uncomfortably.

I thought I saw something warm in Stoick's eyes, unlike the affection he'd been displaying for these past few months; it was pity.

Normally, I would hate it when somebody pitied me, but his felt understanding, not irritating or condescending.

Then he broke eye contact with me and turned back to Alvin. "My conditions are my conditions, regardless of whether he is a Viking of Berk or not."

Alvin smiled mockingly. "Of course." He drew his own sword, a rusty, blackened weapon. "Now, if I succeed," he began, eyes glittering with menace, "Berk becomes my conquer."

Stoick's face was tight. He nodded wordlessly.

"As," Alvin grinned, "is Hiccup."

He didn't need to say that, if Stoick lost, the sword fight would end in death for him, but then, he didn't need to.

The circles under Stoick's eyes seemed to deepen slightly. He nodded again.

He tightened his grip on his sword. A thousand unspoken words passed between the two chieftains.

And then Alvin swung his sword.

## 36. Blood Feuds

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 36: Blood Feuds

\*\*Yeah...sorry this got posted so late...BUT I just got in from a wonderful Halloween celebration, truly wonderful. I got to see some friends I haven't seen or spoken to in a while and I dressed up as Hiccup :) Like, I know I'm pretty much too old to be dressing up and all, but I still do. :D I had the vest and the boots and everything and I even had my plastic Viking helmet :D It was just a great day all around, and I started this chapter a couple days ago in a notebook and I could only just hop on the borrowed computer and type it all up and get some more on it done. I'm sorry if it stinks, I was in a bit of a hurry.\*\*

**\*\*Um, also, warning: updates are gonna become A LOT less frequent. I'm doing Nano Wrimo and all, and, so, I'm sorry, but they are. I'll try to post during November, but, if I can't, then I'm very sorry.\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>Stoick parried just in time, displaying a brilliant drag before throwing in an offensive move of his own.<p>

It occurred to me that I had never actually seen Stoick fight before. It was actually interesting to watch, because he was quite good.

Just listening to the metallic sounds from the fight got my mind off the fact that there was a lot of risk involved in this fight.

Alvin ducked Stoick's lunge and swung again. He didn't look the slightest bit surprised when the chief of Berk parried.

I swallowed anxiously, watching the fight as best as I could with Savage still holding my head back.

I realized Stoick was a good swordfighter, better than Alvin. As this thought occurred, my heart seemed to swell as I realized Berk would be safe. Their chief could defend them and they'd be alright. Alvin would have to leave Berk alone now. He wasn't allowed to hurt them anymore.

And, even though I knew that I'd probably cause a huge mess on Berk once Alvin was gone, I also knew that I'd be safe. From Alvin, at least.

Stoick might still try to kill me once everything was said and done â€" but my heart was beating and, for now, I was breathing.

A yell pierced my thoughts and, as I looked hurriedly around to see what was going on, I realized Stoick was leaning over to disarm Alvin.

The Hooligan villagers were cheering and I only realized I was, too, when Savage clamped a hand over my mouth. "SHUT UP."

I fell silent behind his grimy hand and he removed it, thankfully.

Just as Stoick's sword found Alvin's hilt, jerking it out of his grimy hand, another Outcast crept up behind Stoick, an axe over his head, preparing to bring it down for the final blow.

The Hooligans' mouths dropped open and then several people began gabbling in high-pitched voices at Stoick to look out.

"STOICK, NO!" I hollered, trying to be as loud as I could, even though I'd always been useless at yelling.

Savage dealt me a swift blow on the side of my head and yellow and red spots danced in my vision for a second while my head began to throb and, as I reached up to find the tender spot, Stoick jumped at

my yell and, miraculously, turned around.

Caught, the Outcast grinned sheepishly. And then he swung the axe. Stoick ducked. Alvin ducked as well. "Watch where you're going, won't you!" he snapped at the axe wielder.

The axe wielder looked offended and Alvin pressed his sword blade into Stoick's back. The tip of the sword only just touched his thick fur coat, but he stiffened nonetheless. He was faced with two options now: die by the Outcast's hand or by Alvin's.

Either way, the odds didn't look good.

And that's when I realized that this had been Alvin's plan all along: to trap Stoick. Not to kill him, not yet, but to trap him.

"Choose, Stoick," he whispered. His brown eyes were glittering with manic glee.

Stoick glanced carefully around himself and shook his shoulders out, his fur coat catching the sudden wind and whirling around him. He looked triumphant, even though he was about to be killed.

"I choose," he said slowly, and deliberately, but powerfully at the same time, loudly, "to go down fighting!"

"You really do have a death wish, don't you?" Savage jeered from somewhere above me.

As I saw the axe wielder and Alvin both move in for the kill at the same time, one little thought slipped into my head: \_it's your fault.\_

I shut my eyes, but that little voice kept talking, talking, insisting that I had done this, I had caused it. And I could stop it, too.

I swallowed. "Wait." My voice cracked after how hard Savage had been pressing on it, so I repeated the word.

Alvin and the axe wielder both stopped, Alvin about to bring his sword down and the axe man leaning over to hold Stoick still while Alvin delivered the final blow.

"Shut up, you," Savage growled fiercely, but Alvin's eyes had traveled from me to Stoick and something about our expressions seemed to interest him, because he said, "Wait, Savage. Let's hear what the boy has to say, shall we?" he seemed to find it interesting "even amusing" that I was about to try to spare Stoick.

Savage reluctantly released me, but he retreated a few feet away and watched me malevolently, waiting for me to make a false move so he could grab me again.

"Don't." That was all I could manage, and it came out sounding weak and tired. A few Outcasts chuckled and even the Hooligans were shaking their heads wretchedly, hopelessly.

I cleared my throat and tried again, a little louder. "I'm the reason you came to Berk, aren't I?"

Alvin stroked his beard thoughtfully with the hand not holding his sword. "Yesâ€|" he admitted quietly. "That is true."

"Soâ€|so if you don't kill himâ€|andâ€|and if you leave the people of Berk in peace forevermore, then I'll go. I'll go with you, back to Outcast Island, I promise. I won't ever try to leave again or escape again if you justâ€|just don't hurt them."

A wicked grin spread across Alvin's face. "Yesâ€|" he said slowly, and for a second, I thought he was agreeing, and, though I felt happiness for the people of Berk, I felt a flash of fear for myself. "â€|I thought this is what you would do, Hiccup, when faced with the idea of watching me harm a Hooligan."

At the mention of the tribe name, one of the Outcasts spat onto the ground.

"However," Alvin continued, "I'm afraid I can't do that. You see, I was thinking about this and I thoughtâ€|what better way to harm, as brutally as possible, both the Hooligan tribe and the traitor to the Outcasts?" he smirked. "Well, I knew there was only one way to do that." his smirk widened. "And it's all very convenient for me, of course, because I never liked Stoick anyway, so really, nobody loses." he grinned.

"I'm what you wanted," I said and even I heard the pleading note in my voice now, but I didn't care, so desperate was I to convey what I wanted to. "Please, just take me and go."

"Hiccup, Hiccup, haven't I just explained why I can't do that?" he sighed, shaking his head. "It seems tragic, reallyâ€|and so the great Stoick the Vast, chief of Berk, meets his end this way, like all those before himâ€|because he got caught up in those blood feudsâ€|"

"It was you who began this feud, Alvin, and in the end, you will be the one to die." Stoick said quietly, solemnly.

Alvin moved forward and raised his sword above Stoick's head.

### 37. Grim Battle

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 37: Grim Battle

\*\*Well, this was short. I'm sorry about that. Two words: Nano Wrimo. It's seriously really hard this year. You might get another chapter later today, IDK. I'm trying here, ISN'T THAT ENOUGH FOR YOU? \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The axe wielder reached over and quietly took the sword from Stoick's hand. Dull grimness had settled over the scene. There was nothing anyone could do.<p>

I had done all I could. I closed my eyes.

\_Pleaseâ€|pleaseâ€|pleaseâ€|Thorâ€|pleaseâ€|Thorâ€|are you listening? Pleaseâ€|pleaseâ€|Odinâ€|. Heimdallâ€|any of youâ€|pleaseâ€|\_

I wanted to shut my ears to block out the noise as well â€" I wanted to block out the noise of somebody dying for me.

I heard a thump. I squeezed my eyes tighter shut, because I could feel tears beginning to build up. A few leaked out and fell onto my cheeks.

I heard growling. I heard the sound of one sword cutting another, the sound of metal-on-metal. I didn't dare to hope, but I dared to open my eyes.

\_Toothless.\_ My heart squeezed as I realized Toothless was staring Alvin down, growling at him, threatening him without words.

The crowd of Hooligans had been mostly bound or tied up, but I caught one person who wasn't: Gobber.

He was holding his sword at the axe wielder, but I guess you couldn't call him that anymore, because his axe was long gone.

Stoick was still in the middle of the fray, looking as though he didn't know how he had gotten there â€" or maybe he just hadn't really expected his village to defend him.

The Hooligans who were bound were struggling to get free, or maybe just to fight, but so far, the fighters didn't look like they needed much help â€" Gobber was holding his own, Stoick wasn't fighting anyone and Toothless was snarling and getting ready to pounce on Alvin.

Stoick saw me standing on the outskirts of the crowd and I began to walk towards him â€" but before I could, I felt a fierce blow on the side of my head. I had barely turned before collapsing to the ground, groaning and holding my head. Savage was standing over me, his sword still in his hand.

"Hiccup!" Stoick cried.

Savage turned the sword around in his hand so he was holding the hilt over my head and he brought it down firmly on my head.

Black spots appeared in my vision and I vaguely remember giving off a little groan as Stoick said something to Savageâ€|I thought I saw his mouth form the words, 'you did not want to do that'â€|and maybe a sword shone in the sunlightâ€|and then I was out.

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 38: Mine

\*\*A/N: LOOK AT ME, AVOIDING THE ACTION SCENES LIKE A BLEEP. \*coughs\* anyway, I'm sorry. \*sobs\* I know it's been awhile, but I'm up to 32k and I have no idea what to do with it anymore. I'm gonna try to work on it later, but right now Aiden and Synnova are having some issues. Yeah, those are the two main characters. Anyway, I avoided the action scenes like a boss and I shall leave you to chew on this, because I'm terrible at battles and stuff, but I really did want this in there.  
:D \*\*

\*\*AAAANGST. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I was lying in the grass and it was slightly damp and springy beneath me from all the melted snow.<p>

I wasn't really that cold, but I couldn't feel much of anything really. I felt something warm and wet running down my leg and I wondered vaguely what it was, if it was blood and somebody was bleeding onto me or if somebody had gotten my leg with one of their weapons instead of whoever they were aiming for.

My last thought must've been centered on the battle, because, once I thought this, I realized, in the back of my mind, I'd known since I woke up that we were still in battle.

Feeling started rushing back to me, but I couldn't really feel anything except a sort of burning around one legâ€|I didn't move, hoping it would go away.

Everything else on me was numb from cold, but I didn't mind.

The sounds of the battle seemed to drop a little. I felt hot breath on my cheek and I heard somebody whispering something in my ear in a voice that made my blood run cold, though I wasn't sure why. "Shh, shh, Hiccup. I shouldn't like anybody to be alerted of this before it's time."

"Uhâ€|" I groaned. Pain began rushing back full-force, and it wasn't just a burning sensation around my leg; somebody was ripping it, tearing it, digging deep into the skin and breaking every bone, stretching every muscle and snapping every tendon.

Just as the pain reached its peak and I thought for sure that I was going to pass out, the hot breath on my face and ears came faster than before. I felt somebody pressing down on my leg and I wanted them to stop. I was on the verge of begging them to please, please, please stop when suddenly, they did.

Tears of pain were stinging my eyes and clinging to my lashes. I reached down to clutch at my leg and suddenly, the warm wetness

soaked my hands. When I lifted them up, I saw my fingers were stained with blood. My stomach churned.

I swallowed and formed my hands into fists, raising my eyes to stare down my attacker. Before I could, I heard a voice with a thick Scottish accent in it yelling, "Get away from him!"

My mind tried to make me remember who it was, but I couldn't. Something about the voice seemed to suggest that if only I drew nearer to it, I could be safe forever. The thought saddened me, because I knew that, for me, being safe forever was just a dream.

Nobody cared for me enough to keep me safe, not forever. Nobody was that inclined to stand up to Alvin the Treacherous, not for the sake of some stupid kid.

I heard the sound of blows being exchanged. There was a very loud yell and suddenly, the sound of metal penetrating flesh.

Then the voice with the Scottish accent was speaking to me. "Hiccup? Hiccup, are you all right? Hiccup, can you hear me?"

"Uhâ€¦" I groaned, opening my eyes just a fraction. I saw Stoick the Vast kneeling over me, gray eyes shining with worry.

I wanted to give him a straight answer, but I was scared; if I hadn't died from that man's hand, why was Stoick here? To finish the job? I swallowed uncomfortably.

Stoick slowly picked me up in his arms. He looked like he didn't even care that melted snow was dripping from my hair onto his shirt, or that his clothing was getting soaked with blood from me.

"Oh, son," he whispered, "can you hear me?" He kept staring down at me, like he was trying to tell if I was breathing or not.

"Uh." I managed.

He leaned down and listened very closely at my chest, listening for a heartbeat. His eyes lit up when he heard it. He hugged me tight, he hugged me close. "Oh, Hiccup." he breathed and for just that one second, he looked like he had these past few weeks, years younger, like nothing else in the world mattered right then but smiling and laughing.

"I can hear you." I whispered weakly and he smiled a little. I wanted to sleep. I let my eyes fall closed.

"You can't hide him forever, you know." Another voice whispered. "I'm coming to find him. I always get him back in the end, Stoick. He's mine, you know."

My eyes fluttered open again and I was staring into the hated, scarred face of Alvin the Treacherous, gloating and sneering over Stoick.

My heart started beating uncomfortably fast. I wanted to shrink into Stoick and pretend nothing that could hurt me was there, but I forced the fear farther down. "I'm not yours, Alvin." I whispered, but I



doubt anybody heard me with how quietly it came out.

"You can't fight with him," Alvin pointed out, his brown eyes glittering cruelly as a smile lit up his face. "You know that, don't you?"

"You're beaten, Alvin," Stoick said slowly and I attempted to look around to see if this was true, but Stoick gently shoved me back down into his arms. "Go from this place now."

Alvin opened his mouth to retort, but Stoick simply said, "A good chief knows when he is leading his men into a suicide mission. If you attempt to fight us again, I'm afraid your tribe's numbers will be depleted massively." He spoke with such authority that, had I been Alvin, I probably would have backed down, too.

"The Hooligan tribe does not believe in keeping slaves," Stoick continued. "But you will find yourself and your men working for us if you don't leave right now, in peace."

I couldn't tell if Stoick could really care out that threat or not, because I couldn't really see anything, but clearly, Alvin thought that he could.

I remembered that he'd said once, "Alvin the Treacherous never retreats!" I wondered if he was going to attempt to apply that to this situation.

As Alvin looked like he was about to attempt to start fighting again, an axe came from the crowd and nearly took off Alvin's head, sinking deeply into the post just behind him.

Alvin growled a little, like this was sealing the deal. "Set my men free," he said, in a very low voice.

"Done." Stoick said simply and suddenly, I heard chains clinking and ropes being undone and the other Outcasts joined Alvin, rubbing their wrists and ankles and glaring at Stoick.

I watched them silently, along with everyone else, get into their boats. And I knew they'd be back, I knew they'd probably never leave Berk alone now that they'd figured out I'd been staying there since midsummer, but for now, they were beaten and sailing away in their battered battle ships, through the darkened waters and back to Outcast Island.

39. Yes

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 39: Yes

\*\*Um...yes. Yes. I know. Kind of cheesy. Kind of lame. I'm very

sorry. Here's another chapter. IDK how long this is going to be now. I love you all. Hugs and kisses. This was inspired by RazzlePazzleDooDot's wonderful, amazing drawing for the last chapter. AIEEEE it was so cute :D \*\*

\*\*Also, 543 reviews? Holy crap. I'm a lucky bug, people, I am one lucky bug. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>When I awoke, I was warm. Too warm. Sweat trickled down my face. I was soaked in it. The pillow was wet. Stoick's fur coat rested on top of me. I was in a bed, in the middle of Stoick's living room. I wanted to lie here and sleep forever.<p>

Just as I began to close my eyes and lay back down, the events from the last few days began reoccurring, in rapid succession:

Stoick was carrying me up to bed in his arms, smiling gently down at me as I shifted and mumbled something.

Stoick was resting a hand on the hilt of his sword, glaring at the Murderous Tribe.

Stoick was turning coldly away from me and whispering the words, "You're not my son."

Stoick was using his sword to cut my arm.

Stoick was standing over me with the same sword and I couldn't move, I couldn't breathe. I was sure to die of this pain and loneliness soon enough: why couldn't he let me?

I was staring down into the water, Toothless beside me, moaning and licking the tears off my face to try and cheer me up.

Stoick was calling my name, holding me gently in his arms, whispering over and over and I was whispering back.

"Hiccup, can you hear me? Are you alright?"

"I can hear you." I whispered.

I sat bolt upright. I had to get out of here.

But as I sat up, I realizedâ€|something was wrong. My leg burned and throbbed with every movement. I slowly lifted the covers and saw my leg swathed in a white bandage. And below the kneeâ€|below the kneeâ€| I gripped the blankets tighter. Every movement hurt.

I slowly looked around and saw Toothless standing quietly beside the bed, wings surrounding me like a protective cocoon, standing over me protectively.

I pushed the blankets and Stoick's coat off myself.

"C'mon, Toothless," I whispered, but Toothless pushed me back in bed by my stomach. "Toothless," I said irritably, "c'mon. We need to go."

Toothless kept sitting there with that stern look of his.

"Look," I tried to keep my voice level, "I don't want to see you get hurt, okay? If they come back and find us, they will kill you."

Suddenly, the door flew open and Stoick stomped in. I made a strangled sound and quickly withdrew from the side of the bed, trying to stand.

Toothless and Stoick all ganged up on me, gently pressing me back down into the bed.

I couldn't even beat Toothless in our play-wrestling matches on a normal day but with the combined strength of Stoick as well I could barely fight. I fell back onto the bed and whimpered slightly as my leg hit the bed and I gripped my blankets tighter, remembering that there was nothing below the knee.

"Easy, son," Stoick whispered, kneeling by my bedside and smoothing down my hair. "You've been through a lot and you need rest."

I tried to say something, to fight the soothing hands on my head that I wanted to keep there forever. "Uh." I muttered.

He gave me a slightly sad smile. "Shh. Shh. Go back to sleep."

"No!" I sat up way too quickly, discarding the blanket he had laid back over me completely. "No." Once again, I swung my legs "well, leg " over the side of the bed and attempted to push myself up and, again, Stoick shoved me gently back down.

"Easy." he repeated.

"Uh-uh." I mumbled, shaking my head frantically, trying to convey to him that I didn't want him to kill Toothless.

"Hiccup, you're alright," he said softly, but I wasn't. I was never gonna be again.

"Toothless." I told him.

"What?"

"Toothless." I repeated, working up my throat to say more words. "Will you take care of him? Please?"

"We have been," Stoick replied. "What, just because you've been asleep for days means we're gonna let Toothless starve?"

"Days?" I demanded, my head spinning. "Then" I could feel my brow knitting. "Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why" I mumbled, but I couldn't go any farther. I wanted so badly to lean against Stoick, close my eyes and sleep and feel his warm arms around me one more time, but I gritted my teeth and struggled to stay awake, to keep myself from completely breaking down. How was it that I could be strong under the harshest of conditions, but the

moment Stoick looked at me with such love and affection in his eyes, I felt like crying like a little kid?

\_Listen, Hiccup. What you want doesn't matter. Get your head in the game and think of Toothless. I know you have a buried instinct somewhere in there, some form of self-preservation, right?\_

I reminded myself that Stoick had told me they were looking after Toothless. Was Toothless okay with that? Was Toothless okay with them killing me? I glanced up to see my dragon perched at my bedside still, encasing Stoick and me in his ebony wings.

He looked peaceful, serene. My throat tightened. He looked happy. Could he be okay with these people? Could he be? Even ifâ€|even if they killed me?

It was getting hard to swallow now, but I knew if Toothless was okay with it here, then I could allow myself a few moments to be weak, to pretend Stoick loved me again, even though I knew he didn't and I knew it was stupid to pretend. I was too old to play pretend.

Toothless leaned down next to me, studying me with his watchful, serene green eyes. I realized Stoick was reaching out to touch me. I looked at Toothless. He wasn't stopping him. I let Stoick take my hand.

"Hiccupâ€" he whispered, but I slowly pulled my hand away again and looked from him to Toothless.

Stoick looked saddened, but he repeated his words. "Hiccup. I'm sorry."

I must've looked confused, because he added, "Forâ€|for everything."

"Oh." How could I not remember what he was apologizing for? The best I could figure was whenâ€|when he'dâ€|held that swordâ€|

Don't go there, my thoughts warned me. It was scary how happy I was to obey.

"W-why?" I asked.

"Forâ€|" Stoick dropped his gaze to the wooden floor. "For what I saidâ€|what I didâ€|"

"No," I forestalled him. "I mean, why? Why are you sorry for everything?" I sat up. My leg begged me not to move any more than I had to, but I pushed it away. I could deal with the fact that I was missing half of my leg later on. I didn't need to stress about that right now.

"B-becauseâ€|becauseâ€|I almost killed you." Stoick whispered. He wrapped his arms around me, his beard tickling my nose. "I almost lost you. I almost lost my son."

My eyes stung with tears. I wasn't his son. I wasn't his son. He was taking me for a ride. He'd said the terrible words himself. Did he have to tease me?

I wanted to push him away, but I let him stay. I let him get close to me. I let him do it. If Toothless didn't care, then I didn't, either.

"I hope you can forgive me, son."

I gently pushed him away, looking back at him, studying his face. "Why? Why do you keep saying that? You call me 'son'. I'm not your son."

He cupped my cheek with one hand. "But," he said quietly, "you are." he offered me a gentle, hopeful smile.

I shook my head, angry that I wasn't able to understand. "You told me I wasn't," I reminded him. Pain flared in his eyes.

"I'm sorry."

"You branded me." My breath was coming faster now, like I was about to start sobbing. I forced the tears back.

\_Oh, please, don't cry here. Anywhere but here. Not in front of him.\_

I took a deep breath. "You branded me a traitor and you told me I wasn't your son. Will you just tell me why all of a sudden, you're acting like nothing has changed?"

"It has." he whispered. "And I am so sorry with what I put you through. But—" he swallowed, continuing his sentence. I got the feeling he was trying to be strong for me. "—You are my son."

"No, I'm not," I said at once. "Alvin—"

He carefully laid a finger on my lips, shushing me. "—Told me that you are mine."

"What?" My head spun.

"My son," Stoick repeated. "He called you 'your boy'." He put quotation marks around the last few words. "And then he said you were my son. But of course, you don't remember that. You were unconscious at the time."

"I—|I was?"

"Yes." Stoick replied and he left it at that.

I was a little wrong-footed because of that. I was dizzy. I was tired. I was hungry. Heck, I was starving. I was thirsty. I wanted to believe it. But I knew I still had to go. "But—" I mean, I still have to leave."

"Why?" Stoick looked surprised.

"I'm an Outcast," I explained. "You don't want an Outcast on your shores, do you?"

"You," Stoick whispered, resting his hand on my shoulder, "are the

exception."

"Only because I'm your son," I told him. "And, for that matter, I don't care that I'm your blood son."

\_Liar\_, the voice in my head chuckled but I clenched my fists and shoved him out, because I knew I had the strength to do it.

"Just because I am, that makes it okay for me to stay on Berk? What about the other Outcasts? If you found out one of them was your blood son, would you let them stay on Berk?"

His eyes grew very sad. "It's not about blood, Hiccup. It was about you. You offered to give up your whole life for the sake of Berk."

I glanced down at my covers. "Yeah, but that's just becauseâ€|Berkâ€|that's got nothing to do withâ€|" I tried, but Stoick interrupted.

"Blood or not," he whispered, wrapping me in a tight hug, "I love you."

I stared up at him, even more wrong-footed than ever. "Iâ€|uhâ€|really?" I couldn't remember the last time I'd spoken the words or heard them.

The moment I realized what I'd said, I tried to correct it, but Stoick just pulled me into his lap as gently as he possibly could, noticeably favoring my left leg. "Yes." he whispered.

#### 40. Best for Everyone

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

#### Chapter 40: Best For Everyone

\*\*A/N: Okay, wow. This story might end up being longer than I originally planned. I meant to only do 40 chapters and this happens :P I knew I would hit at least twenty-five with how much I expounded upon the Hiccup/Stoick relationship and all, but c'mon! Do you think 41 is too many or just right or not enough? Also, 567! that's how many reviews I have and I am so happy about them :D \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I let Stoick hug me for about another ten seconds and then I pulled away from him again. I wanted to get off his lap and sit on the edge of the bed or just somewhere that wasn't him. To be honest, he was getting a little touchy-feely and, much as I liked him, I didn't do very well with hugging or touching, especially when the person was as big as Stoick was and could knock me over with their breath. But, unfortunately, my leg was beginning to hurt worse and I didn't know if I could slide off him and onto the bed quickly enough

without jolting my leg. The last thing I wanted to do was ask him for help, so I just kind of sat there awkwardly, waiting for his next move.<p>

He seemed to realize how awkward I was feeling; he had been smiling expectantly at me, but now the smile slid off his face. "Oh." he said, as if just realizing something, "right." And he very carefully removed his arms from around me, slowly pushing me back onto the edge of the bed. I straightened up and tucked my hair out of my eyes. For all the conversations between us that had come so easily, so naturally, before he knew I was an Outcast and I knew I was his son and everything, the silence sure was getting awkward.

I opened my mouth as I thought I might have something to say and then I closed it again, deciding that wasn't something I wanted to say to him right then.

Stoick sighed reluctantly, like we were reaching a subject he didn't want to discuss. "Right." he straightened up. He straightened his Viking helmet and said quietly, "I understand if you wouldn't like to live on Berk afterâ€|everything that's happened. Butâ€|" he raised a hand, even though I hadn't even been about to say anything â€" maybe it was preliminary â€" "â€|I would like you to know that, should you choose to stay here, you would always have a home here."

The second-to-last word was the one that really stuck with me, because I honestly wasn't sure whether I'd ever had one before. I swallowed, feeling my throat beginning to constrict in much the same way it had on Snoggletog night, when he'd given me the Viking helmet and I'd given him the sword. "Umâ€|sirâ€|" I fiddled with the blanket on my left side.

Stoick looked confused as to why I was bothering to address him in the formal manner I had been since arriving on Berk, but I didn't meet his eye as I struggled to find a way to explain why I couldn't have a home, especially not here. "I think it would be best if I left Berk," I told him quietly.

He nodded, though his eyes had regained the sad look they always seemed to carry. I wondered if I had put it there or not. "I understand." he said somberly and the way he said it made me think that his thoughts were going down a darker path than mine, so I hastily tried to correct it. If I had to leave, I didn't want to leave him thinking that I was angry about everything that had happened before Alvin attacked. "That's not what I meant, sir," I tried to explain to him, "I only meantâ€|Alvinâ€|you guys, you shouldn't have to deal with him when he's still looking for meâ€|"

Stoick's gaze softened. "We would look out for you," he said in a strong, clear voice. He nodded a little, as if he wanted me to fully understand this. "We would."

I shrugged. "You shouldn't have to."

"Hiccup, you'reâ€|if you want to beâ€|then you're one of us now," Stoick managed. "That means we look out for each other. It's our job. And whether or not you know it, it's what we'd do for each other anyway, Hiccup."

"You'd be willing?" I whispered. At his confused look, I added, "You'd be willing to put your whole island at risk for some stupidâ€"

"Hiccupâ€" he began to interrupt.

"â€"Kid?" I finished determinedly. "I thank you for the offer, but it's not your job to protect me, Stoick. It's not anyone's job, no one's except mine."

Toothless made an affronted noise in the back of his throat.

"Fine," I conceded, "Toothless considers it his job, too." I glanced over at him to see how he was taking all this; he appeared satisfied.

Stoick took a breath. "If you ever do decide you need a place then," he said at last, his hands on his knees, "then just know that you always have a home here, on Berk, with me. Always."

I nodded. I wanted to show my thanks in another way, but there was simply no way to convey the emotions that I was feeling at that moment. How could I tell him how much it meant to me that he didn't care that I was an Outcast or anything without looking stupid?

"When will you be leaving?" Stoick asked. His voice had taken on a brisk, businesslike tone that didn't totally cover the warmth that still lingered there. "Gobber has been making you a prosthetic, but your leg still needs timeâ€"

"It'll be fine," I said dismissively. "I'll be leaving as soon as I can."

I knew I was being rude to him, but there was something in his eyes, some emotion I couldn't quite define that scared me. I didn't want to stick around too long. Being a Viking basically means being fearless, so it was hard to admit, even to myself, but I was scared. If I were here too long, they'd surely get tired of me. If I was here too long, Stoick might change his mind. If I was here too long, Stoick might decide to take his offer back or worse, decide he didn't want to let an Outcast leave his shores alive.

I knew that it was unlikely that he'd want to kill his blood son, if that's what I was, but he seemed so heartily convinced of it, it was hard not to believe him.

And what about Toothless? What if he decided he didn't want to let a Night Fury leave his shores? No, it was better, far better if we left quickly.

It was best for everyone, I assured myself, but even I couldn't deny the slightly hollow feeling that came when I thought about leaving the closest thing I'd ever had to a home.

#### 41. Stumble

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling



with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

## Chapter 41: Stumble

\*\*Um. Yeah. The chapter's ending was hasty, but I like it. The chapter, I mean. The ending...eh, well. The ending could use some work. BUT! \*\*

\*\*BUT, I like the chapter. And that's very rare for me to do. Yes. Stoick. Yes. Hiccup. Yes. Yes. Yes. I'm not really sure if there are any actions of theirs that demand explanations in these chapters. Obviously, Stoick is feeling guilty and Hiccup is questioning Stoick's loyalty/love towards him, because he honestly doesn't think Stoick cares about him anymore. It took him awhile to come around and admit that he saw Stoick like a dad and that he THOUGHT Stoick saw him like a son. Stoick shatters that trust within a few short chapters. Of course Hiccup doesn't think he cares anymore. Actually, he believes Stoick never cared.\*\*

\*\*Also, Stoick's concerned, I think. Sometimes, I'm off on my muses, but I think I'm spot-on, here: Stoick is concerned, because Hiccup lost his leg and any sane person would know to wait, but Hiccup is just raring to leave, or so it seems to Stoick, because Hiccup is putting up a very good show. So, angst. So Stoick is having some angst of his own, so...yeah. \*\*

\*\*I ended rather hastily because I realized how long the chapter was getting.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>I took a breath.<p>

"It's hard," Stoick warned me, watching me carefully from across the room. He'd wanted to be beside me, there to catch me in case I started to fall, but I knew Toothless would.

I nodded. I was sitting on the edge of the bed two days later, with the prosthetic Gobber had made for me fixed on, and Gobber, Stoick and Toothless all watching me.

Their stares were starting to make me uncomfortable, although I knew they were only watching to be sure I had the hang of the leg. It was the first step I would take with a prosthetic.

I took a breath and pushed myself up from the bed. Pain shot through my leg and I swayed dizzily for a second. Stoick and Toothless both moved in, their concerned expressions identical as they did so, but I waved them both away again, leaning heavily on the bedpost.

Stoick listened and scooted back again, but Toothless didn't. He gave a little moan and nudged me encouragingly, watching me as I attempted to stand on my own. If I fell, he would be there.

The thought comforted me just slightly and I let go of the bedpost, leaning a little bit of my weight on the fake leg. The pain started up again, aching and throbbing. I took a step forward.

The pain seared through my leg again, and I started to stumble, but Toothless leaned up and steadied me with his neck.

"Thanks," I whispered.

He shifted so he could help me along more comfortably, but I reluctantly took my hand off him. "Sorry, bud." I had to do this on my own. Toothless' eyes narrowed, but he let me go. He didn't like me trying to walk on my own and he didn't like me being in pain, but he understood it.

I would've left Berk before even attempting to walk on my own, but Stoick's concern had stretched as far as to ask me to let him see how I got around with the prosthetic for one full day and then he didn't mind if I went. I didn't know if he was doing it because he was genuinely that concerned or what, but I had just warned Toothless and told him to be on his guard.

The dragons had not attacked for weeks, but that was to be expected; they always hunkered down for the winter, Stoick explained and when spring came, he said that he thought the people of Berk had watched me enough to get the hang of what they were supposed to do.

Everything had been cleared up. There was nothing else for it but for me to leave.

I expected Stoick to become more distant as the day of my leaving drew nearer, but it was the exact opposite: he seemed to become more concerned, more careful with me, as it did.

I snapped back into reality at hearing his voice. "Hiccup?"

I looked up, startled out of my reverie. "Yes, sir?"

"Are you alright?"

I nodded. I realized I was still leaning a little on Toothless and I hadn't moved for the last few minutes; I'd been too lost in thought to remember what I'd been doing.

I struggled to push myself up and Toothless grumbled a little in the back of his throat, reluctant to allow me to go through pain with the knowledge that he could ease it, but he allowed me to go.

I straightened up and took another slow, small step forward.

Gobber winced a little every time I moved, but he made no move to help me. As this thought occurred and I stumbled forward slightly, pain shooting through me, my eyes traveled over Gobber's prosthetic limbs and his winces made sense. He understood what it felt like, he understood.

He might've even been remembering how painful it was for him when he lost his limbs.

Stoick winced a little, too, taking a breath, though he couldn't possibly understand how painful it was. He'd never felt this before.

I heard the wind whistling outside the chief's hut, blowing in through the glassless windows and I shivered a little as a blast of cold air reached me.

I wasn't looking forward to leaving Berk, what with the cold weather that was still going strong. Stoick had warned me about the cold weather and told me I might want to wait until spring.

I couldn't. I knew I couldn't. I'd swallowed my desires and told him I thought it would be best if I left as soon as possible. That sad, cold something in his eyes had reappeared when I'd said this and the lines around his eyes seemed to tighten, but he'd nodded somberly and he'd agreed.

I took another deep breath, pushing my thoughts away from the fact that I was leaving soon. I didn't want to think about that. But I didn't want to admit to myself what I really wanted, either. On the whole, I was just trying to pretend that what was really happening wasn't. And I was trying to pretend that it wasn't completely, totally, entirely my fault that it was happening.

I tried to steady myself as another cold blast of wind blew in.

'Maybe you should stop,' Toothless seemed to be saying, eyes fixed nervously on me. I couldn't blame him; I was swaying where I stood and I had a hand over my mouth like I thought I was going to hurl.

"I'll be fine," I assured him quickly. He didn't look terribly convinced.

I turned my attention back to my steps, watching my boot and prosthetic go, one after the other as I attempted a third step.

"Are you sure?" Stoick had heard me assuring Toothless and clearly didn't believe me for one second; his eyebrows were pulled up skeptically.

"Of course." I nodded, rolling my eyes slightly like it was silly of him to think otherwise, but in truth, I kind of liked how concerned he was acting. I told myself it was stupid to like it and that I'd better stop now, because I was leaving Berk soon and I would never be able to come back, but it didn't work.

"You might want to take a break." Stoick warned me. "You don't want to overdo it."

"I haven't even taken three steps since I started," I informed him in my best, 'I'm insulted you think I need a rest' voice.

"For somebody who's just lost a limb, Hiccup, that could be overdoing it," Gobber told me.

It was clear I was going to lose the argument, so I decided not to get into it. "Look, I'll be fine."

Toothless stepped in front of me and gently nosed me back down onto the bed. I wound up laying on the edge, where I pulled myself into a

sitting position and sighed, folding my arms. I had been outvoted, three to one, and I wasn't going to be allowed up without help for hours, I was sure.

I was leaving the very next day for Thor's sake " didn't they realize I had to learn to get up and do stuff for myself?

Gobber, who was standing nearest the window, peered out into the snowy landscape and muttered, "It's gonna drop tonight, I'll bet."

"What will?" I asked, absently rubbing Toothless' head. He purred a little, like a cat, curling up beside the bed.

"The temperature," Gobber explained, looking away from the window and fixing his gaze back on me. "Why?"

I sat bolt upright. "It's possible for it to drop?"

Gobber's somber expression, which had stayed firmly fixed on his face the entire time he was watching me attempt to walk, broke suddenly and he chuckled just a little. "Yeah, where've you been all winter, Hiccup? Don't you know how cold it gets here?"

"I've never had a Berk winter before," I defended myself. "It's a lot warmer on Outcast—I mean—where I come from." I'd stumbled badly on the words 'Outcast Island'; I saw Stoick and Gobber exchange glances, like they were making a decision or both sharing a quick psychoanalysis of me.

I gritted my teeth and turned away from them, back to Toothless. Toothless' ears twitched sleepily.

I gently rubbed at his head, scratching him behind the ears. He glanced up at me and then around at Gobber and Stoick, who were still exchanging glances.

Stoick looked away first, back to the window, looking at the snow outside. "Yes, well, it's going to get a lot colder, Hiccup." he was speaking slightly awkwardly, clearly trying to gloss over the way I'd avoided saying 'Outcast Island'.

I guess I'd put so much time and effort into lying, and I was so scared that if they were reminded I was an Outcast, it'd remind them how much they hated Outcasts and how much they really should kill me and just make things easier for everyone, that I'd tried to avoid saying the words.

As the awkward silence ensued, becoming more painful with each second, Gobber decided to try and break it. "Well, Hiccup, how's your leg feel?"

"Um—" Instinctively, I reached down and massaged the area where the stump met prosthetic; it ached a little under my touch and I pulled my hands away. "It—feels okay."

"Good." Gobber nodded.

With the silence now reaching its peak, I swallowed and said, "Well, uh—"

"Well, I'd better be getting back to work," Gobber said quickly and he excused himself from the awkward conversation and went right back to the forge.

Stoick watched him go from the window. He blew out a long breath, turning to me. He looked tired and sad, I noted. I wanted to do something for him, to help him, but I knew there was nothing I could do. He pushed his Viking helmet up a little higher on his head and rubbed his temples, sighing. He removed his hands, letting his helmet fall back onto his head, over his hair. "Are you feeling alright, Hiccup?" he asked me, looking up at me.

I nodded wordlessly, gazing down at Toothless' head where I stroked it with my fingers, pretending I couldn't hear Stoick's heavy footsteps drawing closer and closer as he seated himself in the chair beside my " I mean, the " bed.

The chair creaked a little as he seated himself. "Hiccup" he began. He stopped himself and there was silence. I kept staring down at Toothless, although my fingers were stroking him faster and faster as I nervously waited for his next words

We hadn't spoken to each other much since we'd agreed upon the time when I would leave Berk; in fact, this was the first time we'd spoken alone since he'd announced to me that I was his son and then he'd explained to me how I'd lost my leg.

I could hear the chair creaking a little more as he rocked backward and forward in it, clearly at a loss for what to say.

"How is your leg?" he asked, as if he thought I hadn't been completely honest with Gobber.

I shrugged. "It hurts." It was the best answer I could give.

"I'm sorry," he told me. "I should've been there."

"What do you mean?" I glanced up at him. "You couldn't have done anything, could you have?" Seeing as I was only partly conscious when my leg was being cut, I didn't know what had happened with it. All I knew was that Stoick had seen an Outcast kneeling over me, cutting my leg with an axe before he'd managed to pull them off me, knock them out and point out to Alvin all of the men he was missing.

Stoick's mouth drew down at the corners. "If I had been there quicker"

I glanced down at the stump and wondered if Stoick had done that on purpose; had he wanted me to lose my leg? My stomach churned at the thought. Maybe he was lyingmaybe he hadn't really pulled them off. Maybe somebody else had.

Maybe he would've let me die.

I closed my eyes and fists, trying to block out thoughts like that.

\_It doesn't matter, \_I told myself firmly. \_I'll be gone from Berk soon. I'm leaving and I'm never coming back, so it doesn't

matter.\_

At least, that was what I wanted to believe, anyway.

## 42. Running

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 42: Running

\*\*Little shorter than last time...actually, way shorter than last time xD but last time was probably the longest chapter I wrote for this story and it was hastiest ending xD I actually really like this chapter. There's going to be at least one more, possibly two or three. I know I said it's ending, but I promise, there's only gonna be a couple more. And then you guys are finally free. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick fell silent after a little while, and only spoke when the door swung open again and Gobber waltzed in without knocking.<p>

He was holding a Viking helmet and the leather riding vest that I'd been making and, when he spotted me, he hastened over to the bed and set the helmet and vest down on the edge. I looked down at it and noticed the vest's workmanship had changed very slightly, and there were a few additions that I hadn't put on there when I was working with it.

As the vest began to slip off the edge, Gobber gently prodded it back on as I grabbed at it, too.

"Yeah." Gobber nodded at it. "Iâ€|uhâ€|found some things that didn't belong in the forge still and I thought that since you're leaving tomorrow, you might want them back."

"Thank you." I whispered. His words rang in my ears, echoing loudly: \_"since you're leaving tomorrow, you might want them backâ€|" \_

Gobber's words seemed to make everything much more real; it was true, I was really leaving Berk, forever, and I was never, ever coming back. I was giving up my first real chance at a family, a home. Did I \_want\_ that?

\_No, \_whispered a small and very truthful voice in the back of my mind. \_You don't want this, Hiccup. Please just admit it. You don't want to leave.\_

I chewed my lip, still absentmindedly studying the vest, although I wasn't really seeing it and my mind was far from it.

"Are you sleeping in the forge tonight?" Gobber asked. I tore my eyes

away from the vest " I got the feeling he knew what kind of thoughts I was thinking and was keen to keep me occupied.

When I first registered his question, I thought it was a little early in the day for him to be asking that, before I realized, when I glanced out the window, that the sun was setting. My stomach seemed to drop. I was leaving tomorrow.

"Oh." I realized why he was asking and reached inside my vest, pulling the key to the forge out. "Here. I didn't realize I still had it. Sorry."

Gobber glanced down at the key for a second and I expected him to take it, but he surprised me, like the people of Berk had so much these past few days. He closed my hand back over the key and gently pressed my hand down into my lap. "Keep it." he told me quietly. "Just in case you ever decide that you need to use it again."

I should've felt happy; I was being trusted. He trusted me with a key to the forge still. Even after everything that had happened, Gobber was still making me feel trusted. Shouldn't I have been happy?

But no; all I felt was misery and the feeling grew stronger as I glanced out the window at the setting sun, turning the snow on the ground to sparkling gold as it set.

I shouldn't have stayed here as long as I did; I shouldn't have gotten attached. I should be leaving now. I swallowed, looking back down at the vest. I struggled to think of a reply to Gobber's last few words. "You don't have to do that."

When he made a confused noise, I hastened to elaborate. "Give me the key, I mean. " I let my voice drop, but Gobber kept staring at me, waiting for me to finish. I blew out a long breath, struggling to say what I knew I had to. I had to tell him. I had to say that I wouldn't be coming back. But then the sad, cold look would return to Stoick's eyes and the somber expression that had been constantly decorating Gobber's features would come back and it seemed indecent somehow that the cheerful blacksmith of Berk should ever look sad, so I held my tongue.

The silence lasted about ten minutes now before Stoick broke it. He sat down heavily in the chair beside the bed and, without looking at Gobber, he said, "By the way, Gobber, it's alright " Hiccup will be staying with me tonight, so it doesn't matter about the forge."

"Right," Gobber nodded.

"I will be?" I asked; I'd been planning to stay in the forge, but if Stoick wanted me to stay here, I wasn't going to fight him on it.

"Well, I'll be going." Gobber rose suddenly and crossed the room, one hand resting on the doorknob as he regarded me through sad brown eyes. "'Bye, Hiccup." he said softly, like he was seeing me for the last time.

"'Bye," I whispered hoarsely. I wondered how many times I'd be saying that tomorrow. My stomach seemed to clench.

\_Do you really want this, Hiccup? \_A little voice in my head asked me. \_Please don't do this.\_

I closed my eyes, trying to direct my thoughts down a different path. It didn't matter what I wanted or didn't want anymore. I had to leave. I couldn't stay here, not with all these smiling people with families and homes and&#147;

I shook my head. I had to stop thinking like that. I'd be just fine on my own. I wasn't \_running.\_ I was going because I didn't want Alvin to attack the people of Berk&#147;right?

I wasn't running from Berk. There was nothing to run from on there. Except&#147;

\_&#147;I would like you to know that, should you choose to stay here, you would always have a home here." Stoick whispered.\_

Yeah. I wasn't \_running.\_

### 43. Less Than

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 43: Less Than

**\*\*OH MY GOSH SIX HUNDRED, SIX HUNDRED, SIX HUNDRED! THAT'S HOW MANY REVIEWS I HAVE! THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU! ALL OF YOU! THANK YOU ALLLLLLLL! :D \*\***

**\*\*Um...yeah. I have no idea why I decided on this. This is not that good. Like, it's long, for readers who like long stuff, but it's not that good. IDK. Everybody feels...OOC. \*shrugs\* buuuuuut this story's gonna have more chapters than planned. Forty-five, forty-six, possibly forty-seven. I'm not sure yet, BUT, I will work on it. I'm hoping to finish both this one and IDMTHYT before Christmas, but, if all else fails, I'll focus my efforts on the other one, because, frankly, it was supposed to be a Halloween story and now look at it.\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>The next morning's weather got in the way of my plans.<p>

When I awoke, it was snowing. And not the gentle, light snowfalls I'd been seeing all winter.

It was the heaviest snowfall I'd ever seen and I could barely see two feet in front of me just looking out the window.

Stoick was getting ready to leave when I woke up and he didn't look up from pulling on his boots when he noticed me. "Hiccup." he nodded



a little.

I sat up on the edge of the bed and rubbed my eyes tiredly for a second before hearing the howling of the wind outside. I frowned. "Is it raining?"

"Nope," he responded, barely looking up. He crossed the room to the door. "Snowing, actually. Look."

I looked. It was so thick that I was sure anybody who tried to go out in this would end up frozen. "Wow."

"Yep," Stoick replied nonchalantly. "Welcome to Berk in wintertime."

He twisted the door handle and pushed, but nothing happened. He tried to pull inward and nothing happened then, either. "Oh," he muttered to himself, "thought I must've forgotten which way it turnedâ€¦I've done that beforeâ€¦"

He turned back to me and attempted to open the door one more time before going over to the window; the sill was fast filling up with snow and, when he withdrew his head again, his beard was lightly coated in white mush. He sighed and wiped it away with one hand. "I think we're snowed in," he announced solemnly.

"Likeâ€¦\_snowed in\_, snowed in?" I asked, a little nervously, as I went to the window again, Toothless helping me the whole way there.

"What other snowed in is there?" Stoick demanded. He sounded cross, but I reasoned with myself that it was most likely the weather keeping him down.

"I don't think we'll be able to get out until the snow melts," Stoick said, "unless, of course, you'd like to try to crawl through a window, but I couldn't." he gestured wordlessly to himself and I realized that the window was a lot smaller than he was.

"I see your point," I told him.

He nodded and glanced worriedly back out the window. "I suppose others must be snowed in, if we are, too."

"How long will it take the snow to melt?" I asked, turning my gaze from outside to him.

He shrugged. "It could be a few days, considering the weather here. You've seen that firsthand."

I remembered Gobber's words from the previous day: "\_It's gonna drop tonight, I'll betâ€¦\_"

He had been right, I thought to myself. I crossed the room, leaning heavily on Toothless as I did so. "Thanks, bud." I breathed as I seated myself. Toothless curled up beside the bed, shaking his tail to get a few snowflakes that had blown in here off his tail.

Stoick glanced over at the window as well, a frown creasing his face. "I hope this storm doesn't last too long."

I was just so, so glad the people of Berk actually considered this a storm and not one of their rousing snowfalls.

Stoick was still frowning towards the window and, for lack of anything better to do, I did what I'd done a hundred times since I'd gotten it: I examined my prosthetic leg.

I stared down at the shining metal and gently massaged the area where the stump ended, staring down at the metal contraption Gobber had created to help me.

The blacksmith in me was itching to examine it and figure out what he'd done, but I resisted; Stoick was still here and I didn't want to look like a freak who regularly takes apart prosthetic legs to find out how to make them.

The stump was starting to ache again, so I rubbed it absently as I tried to turn my thoughts other ways; I didn't want to think about my leg.

But then, I didn't want to think about anything else, either, I realized as I was reminded that I was leaving soon.

There was no way I could go out in this, though, I told myself as I twisted around on the bed to look out the window again. I'd become a grease stain on the sand.

Stoick looked away from the window as well and sat down in the chair beside the bed, eyes turning instead to the wooden shelf. He picked up a small hunting knife and a half-finished, wooden dancing Viking woman he was sculpting and he began to slowly chip away at her until she began looking closer to finished.

"Wow." I said, before I even realized I was speaking aloud. "That's really good."

He looked up at me and I quickly tried to backtrack. "Erâ€¦sorryâ€¦sirâ€¦" it was the best I could do.

"For what?" Stoick asked. He put down the hunting knife and the carving and turned back to me. He tilted his head slightly, like he was curious. His helmet made a sliding noise on his head and he took it off, setting it down on the shelf. I noticed as he did this that the one he'd given me was sitting there as well, and he'd set his beside mine.

I tore my gaze away from the Viking helmets and tried to remember what Stoick and I had been talking aboutâ€¦oh, right, the carvings.

"Erâ€¦wellâ€¦I don't know," I shrugged. "Umâ€¦Iâ€¦I said, 'that's really good' and maybeâ€¦you don't like peopleâ€¦never mind." If it sounded stupid in my head, it would sound a lot worse when spoken out loud.

His expression didn't change. He merely shrugged and turned back to his carving. I watched him chip away for a few more seconds before he stopped and looked at me, a slight frown creasing his face.

"What?" I asked, feeling suddenly self-conscious, like he was mentally analyzing me.

"Nothing," Stoick replied, turning back to his activity.  
"Justâ€¦uhâ€¦thinking, is all."

"Do youâ€¦do you mind me watching?" I said tentatively. "I don't have to, I canâ€¦I can do something elseâ€¦."

"Oh, no, that wasn't what Iâ€¦anyway," Stoick finished lamely and he turned back to me. "Iâ€¦I only meantâ€¦never mind."

The awkward silences seemed to be falling over every conversation Stoick and I had, I reflected as it happened again.

I struggled to think of something to say, but all that happened was that my eyes flew around the room again, landing on the Viking helmets on the shelf. I wondered what it would be like to wake up in this house every day, to always have blankets and pillows and to come downstairs to see Stoick smiling at me over his first cup of coffee in the morning.

I wondered what it would be like to say goodbye to him every morning as he left to do his work and greet him at the front door every night. I wondered what it would be like to go to the forge and help Gobber every day, to be around an adult but knowing they didn't have the idea to hurt me, feeling safe, secure, feeling protected. Being protected.

I wondered what it would feel like to be met with the same affection Stoick had shown me for the last few weeks, again and again, day after day. I wondered what it would feel like to have a family, a group of people I trusted absolutely around me all the time, a group of people who I loved with all my heart and who I trusted, who I knew loved me back.

I wondered what it would feel like to have a home.

My throat seared and my eyes burned, but I blinked until they stopped. There was absolutely no way I was getting all emotional, especially not in front of Stoick. I closed my eyes for a long second until the tears dried out and vanished, and then I opened them again.

I forced myself back to reality. I couldn't afford to rely on dreams. I had to remind myself that I wasn't being given a family. I wasn't. I didn't have one. I never would.

I told myself this very firmly as I lifted my â€" still slightly wet â€" eyes to meet Stoick's. He was staring at me like he was trying to figure something out and he frowned slightly. "Are you alright?"

"Oh. Yeah." I nodded, but wiped my eyes quickly with my sleeve under the pretense of plucking off a piece of lint. If Stoick noticed, he didn't say anything.

He slowly picked up his carving knife and the wooden woman again, chipping off a few more pieces of wood as he worked. He barely seemed to notice what he was doing. His brow was furrowed in concentration

or maybe he was just lost in thought. He frowned down at his work for a second, like it was displeasing him. He obviously noticed a mistake in the woman's flawless plait, because the knife went down to her hair instead.

Things were starting to feel awkward again, I noticed as I fiddled with the covers on my " the " bed.

It wasn't like it was some great big mystery why; unspoken words seemed to fly in the air above us. I wondered if, maybe, if I said any of these, would they make things better? Would they melt Stoick's frosty demeanor and make him become the warm, affectionate person I had once known? And " more to the point " did I want him to be? I didn't want to see that side of him again, not if I was leaving. I would wonder too much, too often if it was all an act.

And it would make it too hard to leave. It would be too hard to leave if he acted kind to me, like a father, like a family. He would just be teasing me, because I knew I had to leave it all behind.

I struggled to find something to say, mentally reviewing everything I could say, everything I should say and everything I knew I would never say, not to him. "Um"so"uh"does weather always get this bad on Berk in winter?"

Stoick glanced up at me and pursed his lips, like he knew I was deliberately not saying something that I so desperately wanted to and that it annoyed him. His gaze returned to his work. He chipped away at an imaginary mistake before speaking. "Ninety percent of the time, yes," he sighed. It sounded like every word was an effort for him. "But sometimes, we'll get very hot summers and the winters won't be as bad." He kept examining the figure he was carving.

Having exhausted all talk about the weather, I mumbled, "Hmmm." My brain started working to think of something else to say.

I normally wasn't one to fill the silence and that was okay; I liked it when things were quiet, I preferred it that way.

But every time I fell silent, I began thinking of things I didn't want to, or my thoughts would drift to Outcast Island and, with an unpleasant bump, I would remember that they now knew exactly where I was and they could find me at any time.

I was like a sitting duck here.

For a second, those thoughts made me nervous before I reminded myself that if I couldn't leave the island, no one would be able to breach it, either.

I glanced down at the bedcovers for half a second as I thought of this before remembering Stoick's words from a few nights ago.

"My conditions are that you leave the island of Berk forever in peace. And that includes Hiccup."

I glanced up at Stoick for a second and for the first time, I felt curiosity about why he'd done that. Why had he cared that much?

Stoick set the knife down and turned to me with a vaguely curious look, like he was trying to be casual about this. "I actually had a question for you."

I opened my mouth to ask something like, 'what sort of question' but before I could, Stoick had started in.

"What did he mean earlier, when he said you'd become his conquer?"

My stomach dropped as I realized who he must've been talking about, but I played dumb, although I knew it was only saving me seconds. "Who?"

"Alvin," Stoick explained quietly. He picked up his knife again and began uncomfortably fiddling with it. "He called you 'his conquer'. He called you his. What did he mean?"

I stared down at the scratched wooden floor for a few seconds. I was tired of lying. I was tired of running and hiding and being scared, so scared I could hardly think straight. I was tired of all that. I glanced up at him for another quick second, wondering if I could tell him the truth, if I should tell him the truthâ€¦ I shrugged. "No idea. Guess because I used to live in his village."

"Theâ€¦" Stoick stopped himself, shook his head and looked back down at his carving, studying it intently, although I got the feeling he was just doing it to change the subject. "Nothing. Never mind."

"The way they treated you, though," he muttered more to himself than to me. "They talked about you, likeâ€¦likeâ€¦like you weren'tâ€¦like you weren't even there."

I shrugged.

Stoick shook his head, like he was disgusted with something. "He treated you likeâ€¦like you were less than."

"I know." Being berated by Alvin didn't upset me. I'd listened to him tell me I was stupid and worthless far too many times to care what he said anymore. What really upset me was the way the people of Berk had heard him taunting me, heard him making me feel less than and that it was new to them.

I fidgeted uncomfortably with the blanket for a few seconds before Stoick spoke again, quietly, softly. "You're not."

"What?" I raised my head, not really sure of what he was saying; he clearly thought I'd understand, which I didn't.

His gaze softened a little when it rested on me as he looked past the carving and back at me. "Less than. You're not. Alvinâ€¦the way he spoke to youâ€¦it was like you were. But you're not."

"Oh." I said.

"Yeah." he nodded awkwardly. "Thought I'dâ€¦you knowâ€¦put that out there."

"Oh." I said again. "Well. Thank you, sir."

"Don't let him," he continued. His voice sounded a little stronger now and the thick silence hovering on the fringes of our conversation didn't seem so awkward anymore. "Don't let him tell you that. Orâ€|or anyone else, for that matter. You're better than that."

"Umâ€|okay." I wasn't really sure where he was going with this, so I kind of nodded. He might be feeling more comfortable, but he didn't seem to realize how awkward he was making me feel. "Thanks. I think."

"I mean it," he said.

"I know." I said back.

"I'm sorry." he told me.

"For what?" I asked him.

He turned his eyes back to his carving and the awkwardness seemed to come back again. "For that." he told me softly. "I don't want him to have made you feel less than."

"Sir, I think he's made it his life ambition to make everybody feel that way," I informed him.

A wry smile twisted Stoick's lips. "You've got a point."

The silence faded slowly back into our conversation, still a little awkward, still a little uncomfortable, but slightly better than before. The air had been cleared of a few unspoken words.

#### 44. If You're Curious

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 44: If You're Curious

\*\*This is like a really bad retelling of Twilight with father/son instead of Bella/Edward. And, also, dragons. That is all. This is pretty crappy. I tried. I'm sorry. Hopefully, you guys will be too overcome with feels to notice :) \*\*

\* \* \*

><p>The wind had begun blowing in through our window about a half hour after our conversation and I sat there on the edge of the bed for a little while, but soon I had reluctantly pulled the blanket back over myself, feeling like a weakling as I did so.<p>

Outcast Island had taught me that being cold meant you weren't a real man and, despite how many times I'd tried to rid myself of what I'd been taught, some of them stuck with me.

I glanced up at Stoick, wondering if those were the sort of principles that he practiced; clearly not, since he'd made his concern for me sleeping in the forge clear.

I remembered that night like it was yesterday, the way he'd stopped me from going out the door; the way he'd rested a hand on my shoulder and rubbed soothing circles into my back as he spoke. He was the first person who'd ever done that sort of thing for me.

It had left a warm, content feeling in my chest, like somebody had filled me up with heat, so I remained warm in the dead of winter.

That place in me that had warmed so suddenly had always felt a little cold, a little hollow; the coldness was back again, now that I realized that Stoick's concern was a cruel joke.

My hands fisted tightly when I realized I would never feel that way again. The warmth, the heat, the feeling of being loved and wanted and protected, it had all faded away. And I didn't think Stoick really cared at all.

The hopeful voice in my mind whispered at me that Stoick had tried to tell me I wasn't less than. He'd tried to say something. I just didn't believe he really cared so much.

My face heated as I glanced down at my hands; it wasn't the pleasant sort of heat that had filled me up with affection the night Stoick had offered me a place in his spare bedroom or carried me up to bed when I was half-asleep. It was an entirely different kind, an ashamed blush.

I'd wanted to believe differently and I'd shoved the thoughts to the back of my mind, but now they wouldn't quit torturing me. Stoick had never cared about me and "if I was being honest with myself" could I blame him?

I mean, look at me. What kind of father wanted me for a son? What kind of person could look at me and see me as a son? What kind of person would ever want me in their family?

Well, if Stoick didn't, that was fine by me. Who the hell cared, anyway? I certainly didn't. I was leaving Berk. I didn't care what anyone here thought of me. Why should I? I didn't. I didn't. I didn't.

I think I almost convinced myself.

But if Stoick didn't care why had he wasted time acting like he did? He didn't. He couldn't. I wasn't his son. He'd said it himself. I didn't have any connection to Berk. I shouldn't be here. Why should Stoick let me stay? What did he care? Did he care? At all? Or was it stupid of me to get my hopes up like this?

Stoick's gaze flickered back to me and again, the look of concern overtook his features "the same one he'd worn when he offered me a bedroom" and he frowned slightly. "I was actually curious about something," he commented, setting down his carving knife and turning to me. "You say you're leaving Berk, right?"

"Yes, sir," I nodded slightly.

His frown deepened. "Where will you go?"

"What?" I asked.

"If you don't wish to tell me, I understand," he told me. "But you say you're leaving, but you don't have anywhere to go."

I hadn't actually thought of this and now it sunk in; I was leaving here and I had nowhere to go. I had no one to run to. I was so used to having somebody "Stoick, Gobber, somebody, somewhere" to run to on Berk that it felt strange to realize Toothless and I were gonna be on our own again.

The thought actually made my eyes sting with tears again, but I refused to shed them. I'd never cried in front of Stoick before and I didn't plan on making it a habit.

I blinked rapidly, hoping the tears would vanish. "Um...sir...I..." I planned on just saying that I didn't want to tell him, just saying that I had somewhere, but what tumbled out of my mouth was the truth. "I...I don't know."

Stoick nodded. His mouth drew down at the corners. "I see." he said softly.

His tone made me realize how stupid this looked: a teenage boy with nothing but a dragon, nowhere to go and no one on his side leaving the island that had offered to house him. Stoick must think I was insane.

"There are islands, though," I tried to sound convincing. "I-I know people. I'll...I'll do something. I'll fix it."

There was another silence.

Stoick just nodded again. "You'll find something," he said solemnly, like he was repeating what I'd said. "I see."

He turned away from me for a second or two and when he looked back up, his eyes widened in alarm. "Are you alright?"

"Y-yes," I replied, not sure why he looked so alarmed.

"You're crying," he commented softly.

I reached up, rubbing absently at my cheek, but he leaned over and brushed them away for me. The simple movement reminded me of the phrase: 'dry your tears'. I'd never understood when somebody said it like that: "I'll be there to dry your tears".

I thought it was always stupid, but his action made it pop into my head and I swallowed, feeling more tears begin to build up.

I swiped at my eyes angrily as Stoick muttered something above me. I turned to him. "What?"

"I didn't mean to upset you," he repeated. He rested a hand on my



shoulder; the touch made me flinch backward slightly and, though the lines around his eyes tightened with sadness, he gave no other indication that I had done anything out of the ordinary. "I was only curious."

"Iâ€¦I know," I whispered. If I kept talking, I just knew the floodgates were gonna open and I was going to cry for real, so I tried to keep it short and sweet. "I wasn't thinking about what you said."

"I didn't mean you had nowhere," Stoick's gaze softened slightly. "I meant if you don't count Berk."

"Oh." My throat was closing up; I swiped determinedly at my eyes again and again, trying not to make it obvious. My breathing was starting to get more rapid and my heart felt like it was beating too fast. I swallowed several times, ignoring the lump in my throat.

I stared down very hard at the blankets. "Umâ€¦actuallyâ€¦I thinkâ€¦I shouldâ€¦" my voice broke suddenly and to my horror, the tears burst forth and I couldn't stop them.

Stoick looked alarmed and he stood from his chair, sinking to his knees beside my bed, reaching out for me like he wanted to hug me, maybe, but thought better of it at the last second.

I tried to stop myself, but the tears just kept on coming and I gave up and let them fall onto the blanket. Stoick hesitated for a second longer and then he pulled me into a hug and let me sob into his chest for a second or two. I wanted to pull away from him and tell him something â€" anything â€" but the warm feeling was back in my chest and so I just clung to him as tightly as I could as I sobbed harder than I ever had.

Stoick didn't ask me about it, either; he just sat there, smoothing down my hair and whispering in my ear, "It's okay. It's alright, Hiccup. You're alright." I detected tears in his voice as well, but I shut my ears to everything but the comforting, soothing sound of somebody who wanted me.

He didn't care that I was clinging to him like a child, he didn't care that I was a Viking and Vikings don't cry. He didn't care. He held me close and he kept quiet. I was trembling, or maybe that was him; I'm not sure. All I knew was that I was holding him and he was holding me and everything was right, for the moment.

I knew it had to end; everything good does.

But I made it last, just a little longer than I should have. It was like when he'd carried me to bed all over again; I was being weak and I knew it, but if nobody but him saw me being weak this way, it was okay. Because he wouldn't judge me. I knew that. Or, at least, I was pretty sure of it.

I clung to him and cried harder than I could ever remember crying. I felt his hands, warm on my back through the thin fabric of my shirt. My tears were starting to slow, but I didn't move; I sat there, letting him hold me.

"Hiccupâ€" he whispered. He stopped himself. He tried again.

"Hiccup" he trailed off again and shook his head slightly, wretchedly.

I wasn't sure what to say, either, so for a time, I didn't say a word. The things we hadn't and should have said by now nudged me gently. I didn't want to say them, because I was too afraid but if this man had held me while I cried and offered me a home and a family, I was willing to believe that he wouldn't react badly to this.

"I love you." I tried. My voice threatened to break again. It had been such a long time since I'd said the words.

I could hear him drawing a sharp breath, like he was gasping. His arms were suddenly away from me; he was holding me much more awkwardly than before.

\_I've blown it, \_I thought bitterly to myself. \_I always do. Of course he's not going to say anything. It's not that he doesn't care; he just doesn't love you. He's doing it out of pity. Don't you dare take his pity.\_

I tightened my lips; I gritted my teeth and was about to pull away when I heard him whisper back, "I love you, too." he slowly hugged me again, tighter than before. "You're alright, you know that? You're safe. I won't let anybody hurt you."

The words were nice; they were comforting and warming. I clung to him tighter, tricking myself into believing they were real for a few seconds, before an unpleasant thought occurred to me. My eyes flew open and my grip on him loosened. "Um, uh" "Stoick?"

I felt my cheeks heat as he looked at me curiously; so he'd heard me slip up and start to say 'Dad', too. I had a defense for the first time, but not this one. I swallowed and bit down hard on my lip.

He cleared his throat. "Go on."

"Did" "did Alvin say anything? About" "about when I was on Outcast Island?" At his confused look, I hastened to explain. "You" "you said you're not gonna let anybody hurt me. It" "it made me" "I dropped my eyes to the floor; he tilted my chin upward so I was forced to look at him. My lip had started to bleed by now with how hard I'd been biting down with my front teeth. "It made me think of Alvin," I admitted quietly. "I was wondering" "whether he'd told you anything" "by" "by the way you're acting."

His gaze softened. He pulled me into another hug. "A little," he admitted. "He didn't say much. He was trying to convince me to free him from my conditions, specifically the one including you." he drew a deep breath. "He tried telling me" "some of the things that happened. I don't believe them, Hiccup. He told me" "he told me" "never mind." he shook his head, like he couldn't believe he'd so nearly told me; like I had to be protected or something.

"What" "what did he say?" I pressed, a little nervously.

"Just" "things." he hesitated. "I'm" "I guess I'm still wondering if

they're true."

My heart thudded. "What do you mean?"

"Iâ€¦I shouldn't ask you," he said quickly. He released me from the hug, but he looked shifty. "It'sâ€¦it's your business."

"What do you want to know?" I asked nervously. "I meanâ€¦" I glanced down at the wooden floor again for a second or two. "I canâ€¦can tell you a littleâ€¦if you're curious, I mean."

#### 45. I Trust You

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Chapter 45: I Trust You

\*\*No. I don't know why I decided to call it 'I Trust You'. Nope. Shut up. I know the title is random. ANYWAY. This is some juicy Hiccup angst, but there's so much that it left little room for fluff. I'm sorry to everyone who was expecting that. I really am. But it was 2,575 words of pure Hiccup angst! C'mon! Please?\*\*

\*\*Also, I haven't seen the newest episode yet, but I want to... :P why am I telling you all this? :P I have high hopes for it, though, because I hear Dagur comes in and I love him so much that I even mentioned him in passing in this fic. :D\*\*

\*\*Also, RazzlePazzleDooDot helped me a little with this chapter with one of her reviews...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick drew a breath. I expected him to push me away and say something, but, if anything, his hug tightened and he held me close for a few seconds. He spoke softly, but so suddenly that I jumped. "You grew up on Outcast Island, then?"<p>

I pulled away from him a little, still sitting in his arms but away from his chest, freeing my face so I could respond. "Yeah."

"Whatâ€¦what was it like?" he sounded slightly disgusted, like the idea of the island was repulsive to him, but also like he was fascinated.

I shrugged. "I don't know what makes it different from other islands. It was a lot different from here, I'll tell you that."

Stoick's eyes turned sad. "Yes," he said quietly, "I know it's a lot different." he rubbed my back gently, his hands going in a familiar, circular pattern.

I reached down to rub my aching leg as I waited for him to speak. He shook his head incredulously and muttered something to himself, something about 'I should've known'. He rested two fingers on his temples tiredly.

"Youâ€|you should've known what?" I asked him cautiously. I probably shouldn't have asked at all, but something about him suggested that he needed to say something about it.

"Nothing," he shook his head a little, trying to dismiss me, I guess, but I wasn't so easily dismissed. "Alright," he relented after a second or two, "I was only sayingâ€|I was thinking of when you first arrived here. You flinched like you thought people were going to hit you every five seconds. You had whip marks all over your shoulders and I bet they were on your back, too. You have scars everywhere and you back away whenever other people so much as touch you."

As if to underline the points, as he talked, he gently touched my shoulders first as he spoke of whip marks and then his hands went to my face as he spoke of scars.

"I should've known." he sighed out at last. "You fooled me with your lies about the Peaceable Tribeâ€|I'm looking back on it and wondering why I didn't see it all before."

"It's hard to spot sometimes," I told him quietly. "When you don't really want to know the truth and when you want to believe lies, you don't look too hard. No matter if it's right in front of you or not."

Stoick nodded sadly, with a faraway look in his eyes. There was a few seconds of silence as he stared vacantly into space and I thought our conversation was over. Half of me was relieved we hadn't talked about anything deeper, but another part of me genuinely wanted to talk about it and felt disappointed and more than a little hurt that Stoick didn't seem to care too much.

As if my thoughts had reached the Viking chief somehow, however, he came back to earth with astounding suddenness and admitted, "I'm curious."

"I know you are," I told him.

"No," he shook his head. "You told me you could tell me a little bit if I was curious. I am curious, but I'm not curious about the little things. I want to know why you acted that way."

I must've looked confused, because he explained. "When you first wound up here. The way you acted. I just explained it to you. I know Outcast Island is a rough place to live, butâ€|that rough?" he looked hesitant to keep talking. "You told me before I knew the truth that it was the Peaceable tribe. That you got into fights with them sometimes. Can you tell me the truth?"

I looked down at the floor, studying every crack in every floorboard. "Umâ€|" I hesitated, prodding my feelings and thoughts. Did I want to talk about it? Did I see reason to tell him? Did I see anything that suggested I shouldn't?

I could feel distrust starting to creep up on me, surrounding me like

a fence, like the four walls I'd hid behind for so long.

"You don't have to talk," Stoick responded quickly. "Not if you don't want to." As he spoke, he gently brushed a large hand over my hair, ruffling it a little. I felt the distrust shrink a little as I felt his touch.

Did I honestly believe Stoick wanted to hurt me?

I prodded at myself again and a little part of me kept saying, 'Don't tell him'. I glanced up at him for a second, took a breath and said softly, "It wasn't ever fights. It was Alvin." I took another quick look up at him, but his expression gave nothing away.

"Go on." he said softly.

I tried to think of a way to explain everything to him, but unless I went all the way back, there was no real way to show him what I meant. I considered going back for a second or two; I glanced down instinctively at Toothless. He'd been quietly, calmly watching the whole thing. I didn't know if I wanted him to hear me tell it all to Stoick, if that's what I wound up doingâ€|

I kept staring down at him and he curled up closer to me, swishing his tail contently back and forth, waiting for me to continue my story.

"I told you already that Toothless lost half of his tail when we met," I explained slowly. I couldn't take my eyes off my dragon as I spoke. I didn't want to talk and be able to see Stoick as I did, I didn't want to look into his eyes and see judgement there. I wasn't sure if I had the strength to be judged again.

"It was another Outcast who'd shot him down," I continued. "And so, Alvin told him to take a small search party into the forest to find the dragon he'd shot down. There was a little cove in the forest, all blocked off by boulders. The entrance was so small nobody but I could go through it. I was in the forest when the sounds of the hunting party reached my ears. I went into the cove to avoid them and that's when I stumbled across Toothless."

I didn't want to look at Stoick, but at the same time, I knew I had to at some time. I peeked up at him quickly. His slight frown indicated confusion, maybe, but not repulsion. That was hardly enough to make me feel safe, however; the worst was still to come.

"Toothless couldn't fly away and there was nowhere else in the forest for me to go that was completely safe from the other villagers besides there. I went there every week and after awhile, I visited him every day. I tried to bring him food and the first couple of times he got angry because he thought I was trying to trick him. After awhile, weâ€|" I ran through the events of those days in my mind. They were the happy days and I sighed a little; I was nostalgic for them.

"â€|we just sort of trusted each other." I glanced down at Toothless, who fanned his wings out behind me in a form of comfort, like he was trying to hug me. I'd learned long ago that when a dragon puts his wings around you, he's saying, \_'I will protect you'.\_

I thought about just stopping in my tracks and telling Stoick that nope, never mind, he didn't need to know any of this. But something stopped me. I looked up at Toothless for a second and he looked down at me, gently brushing a wingtip across my face, forcing me to smile. I glanced up at Stoick, who was staring down at me patiently, waiting for me to continue. I'd shifted so much during my story that by now, I was out of his arms, but he held them strangely, like he was ready to hold me again if I needed it.

I dropped my gaze. "Umâ€¦and thenâ€¦one dayâ€¦I decided to show the other people on Outcast Island thatâ€¦that dragons wereâ€¦were different." My story was coming slower and slower as everything about that nightmarish day threatened to cripple me if I kept talking. "I triedâ€¦I used a dragon they kept for training and battling and everything andâ€¦andâ€¦wellâ€¦they got angry with me." My words hung in the silence.

Stoick stared at me for a second, reaching one hand up to smooth down his beard as he thought. "I see," he said softly. "Go on."

I took a breath. So far, he didn't look very surprised. "I tried telling them, butâ€¦but they didn't listen. And Alvin was watching, too, and he took meâ€¦into our homeâ€¦andâ€¦wellâ€¦"

Stoick's brows drew down low, like he could see where I was going and he didn't like it one bit. "He hit you?"

I fidgeted uncomfortably. "Maybe," I mumbled in a low voice. I didn't want to keep thinking about it. I could feel his gaze on me, making me even more restlessly nervous than I usually was. I shifted a little. "Yes," I admitted quietly, staring down at my hands.

Stoick looked angry for half a second before his scowl melted a little. His soft tone was tauter now, though, and I sensed he was having more trouble keeping it together. "I thought as much." he whispered.

I reached up and rubbed absently at my cheek, remembering the feeling of Alvin's hand, reaching out and smacking me with the flat of the palm, sending me tumbling to the ground.

\_I stared up at him in horror for a few seconds before the burning, throbbing, stinging pain in my cheek made itself known. I could feel tears building up in my eyes and I could still faintly hear Alvin yelling at me about Toothless, but I wasn't sure how much longer I could hold the tears back. I wiped at my eyes, touching my cheek tenderly with my fingers. I winced when I touched it, and I pulled my hand back almost immediately again, listening to Toothless still roaring outside, moaning for me.\_

I took my hands away from my face and let them drop into my lap. I stared down at them for a second before Stoick's voice jerked me out of my thoughts. "You don't have to tell me anything, not if you don't want to."

"I'mâ€¦I'm okay." I nodded a little. I didn't know if that was true or not, because every time I'd tried to think about this day before, the thoughts had been so hard to make myself think and, once I'd begun thinking them, they were too hard to stop.

I wasn't sure if I could do it; could I talk about it, when some days I couldn't even let myself think about it?

I caressed my cheek with my fingers one last time before beginning to speak again. "Well, once Alvin and I hadâ€¦" I hesitated, trying to think of what I could call it. "â€¦talked, he, umâ€¦he told me to renounce it. He said that if I wanted to stay alive and a part of the Outcasts, that I would have to kill a dragon and then nothing more would be said about it. I would like to think that I was strong enough to say no to him, but that strength only came when he insisted that the dragon be Toothless. I knew I'd fail, then, though, so what was the point in trying, anyway, even if I didn't care about him? I told Alvin that I wasn't going to do it and he was so madâ€¦he locked us up and told us we were going to be executed in the morning."

Stoick was looking angrier and angrier by the second; part of me wanted to stop, just so he wouldn't get any madder, but I tried to ignore it.

"He tried to kill you?" he blurted suddenly, when it seemed he truly couldn't keep quiet.

"Oh, no," I shook my head. "No, no, he decided against that. I tried to escape with Toothless, you see, and we only ever made it to Hysteric Isle. Alvin found me within two days, I think it was. He normally finds me in about a week or two. I'm surprised it took so long for him to find me here."

I rested my chin in my hands as I thought of it. I felt a sort of cold prickling all over as it occurred to me for the hundredth time that Alvin might've been watching, been watching and waiting for me to do something so he could attempt to strike out and get me back. How long had that been going on, if at all?

Stoick's eyebrows flew up. "You've been to Hysteric Isle?"

"They weren't so bad," I shrugged. "Now they did it nice and polite to my face; they told me that they were going to kill me, instead of leading me around in circles like Alvin likes to do." I gave another shrug. "At least they were straightforward about it."

Stoick stared at me for a second with the oddest expression on his face; it took me a second to realize it was pity.

I shifted a little in my seat, feeling awkward. I struggled to remember where I had left off, hoping that if I kept talking, Stoick would stop looking at me like that. "Umâ€¦yeahâ€¦so Alvin got me back," I continued quickly.

Stoick's expression was still a little too pitying for my taste, but I decided it was slightly better.

"Anyway," I shrugged, "he got me back, I escaped, he got me back, I escaped, he got me backâ€¦this continued for a couple years, by the way, soâ€¦not much to tell there."

Stoick's brows drew down. "Years?" he asked. "Howâ€¦how old were you when this happened, Hiccup?"

I actually had to think about that and try to remember. "Umâ€¦well, I met Toothless when I was ten, I know that muchâ€¦I knew him for two years before anybody else found outâ€¦ten, elevenâ€¦yeah, I was twelve when I was told to renounce Toothless and by the time they'd locked me up, I was almost thirteenâ€¦so, thirteen and fourteen was when I kept trying to escape. So, that would've made me about fifteen when I decided to actually plan something out and run hell bent for leather with Toothless and by the time I'd got to put it into action, I'm pretty sure I'd turned sixteen, though I could still be fifteen."

The pitying look grew clearer in Stoick's gaze. "I'm sorry."

I shrugged. "No need. I'm doing fine."

"I know that," Stoick told me. "But stillâ€¦"

I glanced out the window to see the snow still piled about a foot on the sill. "When will this snow stop?" I asked, in an effort to change the subject.

Stoick shrugged. "I don't know. Like I said earlier, it could be a couple of days." he watched me out of the corner of his eye for my reaction.

Though I felt better since I'd cried and talked a little, I knew there were still some things left unsaid; the awkwardness was already threatening to creep back in on us. Stoick, for something to do, I suppose, rose from his seat on the floor to peer out the window. "Oh," he commented, looking up and down the street, "the snow has already stopped. Thank Thor."

## 46. Stay

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

### Chapter 46: Stay

\*\*Sure. Whatever. This chapter...ugh. It feels stupid. Like, really dumb. Also, seventy thousand words?! HOLY DFGHJKGFJKLHGFKLFDSAS;'H crap! How did I get that many? How?!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>Stoick peered out the window for a second or two longer and sighed a little. He drew back in, shaking his head a little with another heavy sigh. It was like he was making a decision, but that it was a hard one.<p>

The voices in my head were all screaming at me, harping on me, asking me why on earth I had told Stoick everything.



Don't you see, we're trying to stay alive! You're too trusting sometimes! All he did was act all nice and fatherly for a couple weeks and then BAM! He's got you sobbing in his arms and telling him everything. You're just being foolish, the voices snarled at me.

I gritted my teeth as Stoick came back over to me, kneeling gently back down on the floor in front of me. I glanced up at him a little, hope beginning to grow in my heart. He didn't look disgusted. He didn't look freaked out by anything I'd told him. He hadn't even looked like he'd thought me weird when he'd guessed that Alvin had hit me, although I couldn't imagine a moment when I'd felt more ashamed than when I had to look Stoick in the eye and say 'yes'.

Why did you even trust him? You can't. He says you're his blood son, and yet he never explained anything. How did you end up on Outcast Island, Hiccup? Huh? What if he's lying? Or what if he gave you up? the voices taunted.

I felt pain starting to twist my heart, but more than that, I felt the desire to cry all over again. Why couldn't those voices get the picture? I wanted to be left alone. I wanted to trust.

The voice did have a good point, though, I admitted reluctantly to myself. If Stoick supposedly loved me so much and was such a good father, why had he everâ€¦?

You're being stupid, I told myself. Stoick would never have given you up, no matter what you were like.

I sat there in silence for a few more minutes and I tried not to think too hard about those questions, but soon, I couldn't stand it any longer. "Ifâ€¦if I'm your son," I whispered, "why did I have to grow up there?"

Stoick glanced up at me, taking in every word. His eyes softened. He rubbed my back gently. "Oh, Hiccup," he said quietly, "when you were born, you were presumed to be a stillborn. It was easy to believe, son, because we never even got to see you â€" we were only told that you were fragile. So fragile." his expression saddened visibly. He rested a hand under my chin, like he was trying to convince me. "We sent you off the island, out to sea. You were taken then, I suppose." he looked at me curiously. "Does it matter?"

I wanted to tell him no. I wanted to tell him that I hadn't been thinking along those lines at all, but before I could even decide, Stoick seemed to guess what I was thinking, as he so often did. His curious look died on his face. "Oh. Hiccup. I didn'tâ€¦I wouldn'tâ€¦I'm not like other chieftainsâ€¦I would never haveâ€¦" he took a deep, shuddering breath. "Never."

I nodded. "I know." In truth, I didn't know. I didn't know anything.

"Well," I continued, changing the subject, or trying to, at least. "If the snow really has stopped, then that means you probably have to get back to your chieftaining in a little while."

Stoick nodded. And then I realized what the lack of snow meant for me and I felt a cold, hollow misery take over my very being. I tried telling myself that it was only an island. It was only an island with

a couple really nice people who spoke to me like I was an equalâ€|

My throat tightened and that only ticked the voice off even more.

If I'd known you were going to be this much of a weakling, I wouldn't have let you get that close to Stoick, the voice snarled.

My eyes fell to my boots â€" well, my one boot and my prosthetic. I rubbed at the aching stump, wincing a little. It throbbed whenever I touched it and when I didn't, it faded to a dull ache â€" background noise. I let the fire sear up my leg, like an open flame was licking my nerve endings.

I glanced down at my leg, the pain reaching its peak, becoming so terrible I could no longer sit there and ignore it. I bent my head down, hoping Stoick wouldn't see. I clutched at my leg, my knuckles turning white as I tried to make the pain stop. It hurt so muchâ€|I was regretting ever even touching it.

The haze of pain continued for a bit longer â€" it could have been ten minutes, or thirty, or forty â€" I'll never know. I just kept sitting there, holding my leg and eventually I heard Stoick's voice coming to me from a distance, like he was trying to speak to me while I held my head underwater.

I was about to ask him to repeat what he was saying when he sent me a concerned look. "Are you alright?" He must've seen me holding my leg the way I was.

I loosened my grip slightly. "Yeah." I mumbled. "Just my leg."

Normally, I would never have admitted to anyone that my leg was hurting me. But I guess I was telling Stoick a lot of things I wouldn't normally tell people today.

"I'm sorry." he whispered, resting his hand on my good one.

I shrugged. "M'alright."

As his words bounced around in my head, though, I began thinking of his apology the first time, the way he'd said he was sorry that he wasn't able to get to me in time, that he felt bad because he could've stopped it and the voice, I just knew, was cackling.

\_Get out of this one, then, won't you?\_

I could feel myself shaking.

'No,' I argued against myself. 'I don't always need proof to teach me I can trust Stoick. He is trustworthy and I know it.'

The voice in my head smirked a little, but I wasn't in the mood for playing games â€" I turned back to Stoick.

Stoick sighed. "If you say so."

I glanced out the window, trying to take my mind off of everythingâ€|and that's when I was reminded, again, that I was

leaving Berk. I felt the hollow feeling appear back again and I wanted to just rip it out and not let it continue.

I knew what it was from and I wanted to say something; I looked at Stoick, I drew a breath and I tried to speak. My words came out strangled. "Heâ€"Stâ€"Iâ€"|"

I didn't make it any farther than that.

My voice had come out so quietly that Stoick didn't even notice that I had been attempting to speak. He sat down on the bed beside me and it creaked a little, but he ignored it and took my hand. He didn't do it in a strange or creepy way; it was actually kind of nice. He sat there with my hand in his and he gently traced his thumb over my knuckles. He looked down at my hands and I became extremely conscious of just how many scars I had. I wanted to pull away, just so Stoick wouldn't see, but I also didn't want to make him wonder what I was hiding.

I sneaked a peek at him and realized his gaze had turned sad again. He had definitely noticed the scars, however, and was still studying the back of my hand.

"Did Alvin do all of this to you?" he whispered quietly, indicating my scarred hand.

I nodded wordlessly. I didn't need to see the scars to know I was right.

He swore quietly under his breath, looking at the marks again with some sort of twisted fascination in his gaze. It made me feel like a freak show â€" half of me wanted to pull away, but the other half urged me to stay quiet and just sit there.

Stoick released my hand, looking like he was about to kill something â€" I nervously hoped it wouldn't be me.

"I can't believe it." he whispered, letting my hand go.

"Can't believe what?" I asked. "Sir?" I added that on the end, because I realized I hadn't actually called him it in awhile.

Stoick looked confused for a second or two, but then he shrugged and replied simply, "I can't believe somebody could do something like what Alvin did to youâ€"and not just to youâ€"how could he hurt anybody the way he was?" he looked tired and sad and he slowly wrapped an arm around me holding me close.

I scooted a little closer to him. "Sorry." I whispered.

He didn't seem to hear me. "Andâ€"andâ€"the thing is, he hurt youâ€"when you weren't even able to stand up to him. I mean, how could youâ€"?" he kept trailing off, letting go of certain thoughts.

I looked at the ground for a long second. "It's not scary," I told him after a few seconds of silence. "It's not," I added, when I'd seen his disbelieving look. "I'm not going to pretend, and I'll admit that the day he found out about Toothless, I was scared. I was scared as hell. I wasn't sure what to do. But over time, the fear wears you

down so much and it depresses you so often, that one day you look up and realize that you've got no room for fear anymore. It's not that I'm not afraid," I continued, my words flowing freely before I realized I had switched to first person, "because I wake up every morning and I wait for the pain to start coming. I wake up every morning in a cold sweat because I'm sure he's still standing right over me. But I've got no room for it. It doesn't have anywhere to go" the depression and loneliness and sheer impossibility of surviving another day are taking me over and I don't I can't

My voice faltered. I stuttered to a stop when I caught the look in Stoick's eye. "I'm alright, sir," I added quickly.

"You don't have to be." he said quietly. "You don't have to be afraid. I am never letting him touch you again. He put his hands on you, Hiccup, and maybe it continued for awhile, but the important thing is, you are my child and I will protect you with everything and I mean everything" in me."

His voice sounded a little shaky and when I glanced up at him, his eyes looked a little too bright to be completely normal, but he didn't cry. The tears never fell. He sat there looking at me for a long second and then he really hugged me then, like he had when he was letting me cry. He just sat there and held me and he kept whispering how he was never going to let Alvin hurt me.

I wrapped my arms around him, too. I hugged him back as tightly as I could and I scooted so close to him that I was practically sitting in his lap, but I didn't care. "You don't have to protect me," I murmured. My voice was muffled from the thick clothes he was wearing, but he pulled away so he could hear me better.

"What?" he demanded.

I repeated what I'd said and his gaze softened.

"I'm just saying," I mumbled, beginning to feel insensitive. "I mean if I'm leaving you can't look after me wherever I am, can you?"

A bit of pain entered Stoick's expression. "You really are going, aren't you?"

I glanced down at the bed.

Stoick wiped a sweaty strand of hair off my forehead. "I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't ask you to go. It's selfish of me" he stumbled and broke off completely.

I could feel my leg beginning to hurt again and I glanced hesitantly out the window at the snow. It had begun to fall again, lighter and prettier than before, but gentle. Gentle enough to push me in the direction I think I needed to go.

I bit my lip, hating the truth. I looked at Stoick and I thought of his pained expression and the way he'd said that I would never be hurt again. The idea of freedom from pain after so many years of nothing but was almost laughable, but I couldn't help but feel a bolt of longing run through me.

A place to go when I needed somewhereâ€¦a place to cry whenever I'd had a bad dayâ€¦a bed to sleep in every night, a meal whenever I got hungry, a person who cared, a person who smiled and laughed and loved me and didn't hit me and wouldn't ever hit me, because he would never hit me, because he would never let anybody hurt me again, or at least that's what he'd saidâ€¦

My resolve began to weaken. I wanted to protest, I really, really did but I looked into Stoick's eyes and I saw comfort and affection and a home and I wanted to say yes, that I would stay. I wanted to stay.

#### 47. Epilogue: Decisions

To Be Loved the Way You Love Me

\_Life on Berk turns upside down when a sixteen year old boy traveling with a dark past, a world of hurt, and a Night Fury washes up on its shores. The love-starved boy will only tell people one thing about his past: His name is Hiccup. But \_\_where did he live before? And why doesn't he trust anyone?\_

Epilogue: Decision

**\*\*The only reason and I swear, the ONLY REASON I WROTE THIS AWFUL CHAPTER IS BECAUSE I GOT AN IDEA FOR A SEQUEL. THAT IS IT. This ending...ugh... \*\***

\* \* \*

><p>As I realized that I did truly want to stay and as I looked into Stoick's eyes and saw nothing but love and affection in his gaze, I hesitated for a long second. That little voice in my head told me I should go; I didn't deserve love or anything else Stoick tried to offer me. I glanced down at the floor again and Stoick was silent.<p>

I turned the thoughts over in my mind. I knew I should go; but did I \_want\_ to?

\_This isn't about what you want, Hiccup. \_

I looked back up at Stoick for a second and then I looked away again. "If it's so selfish to want me to stay," I whispered, "then I suppose it'd be selfish to admit that I want to stay?" I didn't look at him as I spoke, waiting for his decree. Whatever he said would make my decision for me. I would leave. I knew I would leave. I knew where I was going.

Stoick didn't speak for a long second and, when he finally did, he didn't say what I was expecting. He tilted my chin upward so I was forced to look at him. "Are you suggesting that you want to stay here?"

I pulled away. "Iâ€¦I guess so."

"I don't see why that would be considered selfish," Stoick whispered. "Not if you know there are people who would be happier if you

stayed."

I began to speak, but Stoick finished his sentence without waiting for me. "And I know there are many people who would be happy if you agreed to stay here."

I looked down at the ground for a second, studying the wooden floor.

\_Don't.\_

"Alright, then," I whispered, "if it's alright with you, thenâ€¦I'll stay."

\_This is Berk.\_

\_It snows about nine months of the year and hails the other three. Despite its harsh living conditions, you can grow to like it if you stick around long enough. You can find things you weren't even looking for in the first place.\_

\_I know that's what I did. When I was looking for aloneness, I found something better.\_

\_I found a family.\_

#### 48. Announcement

**\*\*Dear readers,\*\***

**\*\*I'm excited to announce that, after much consideration, I've decided to redo this story once more! If you liked this rewrite, I promise I'm sticking closer to this one than I did to the original. I look forward to seeing you all again soon :) \*\***

End  
file.